ASIANGeographic

NO. 170

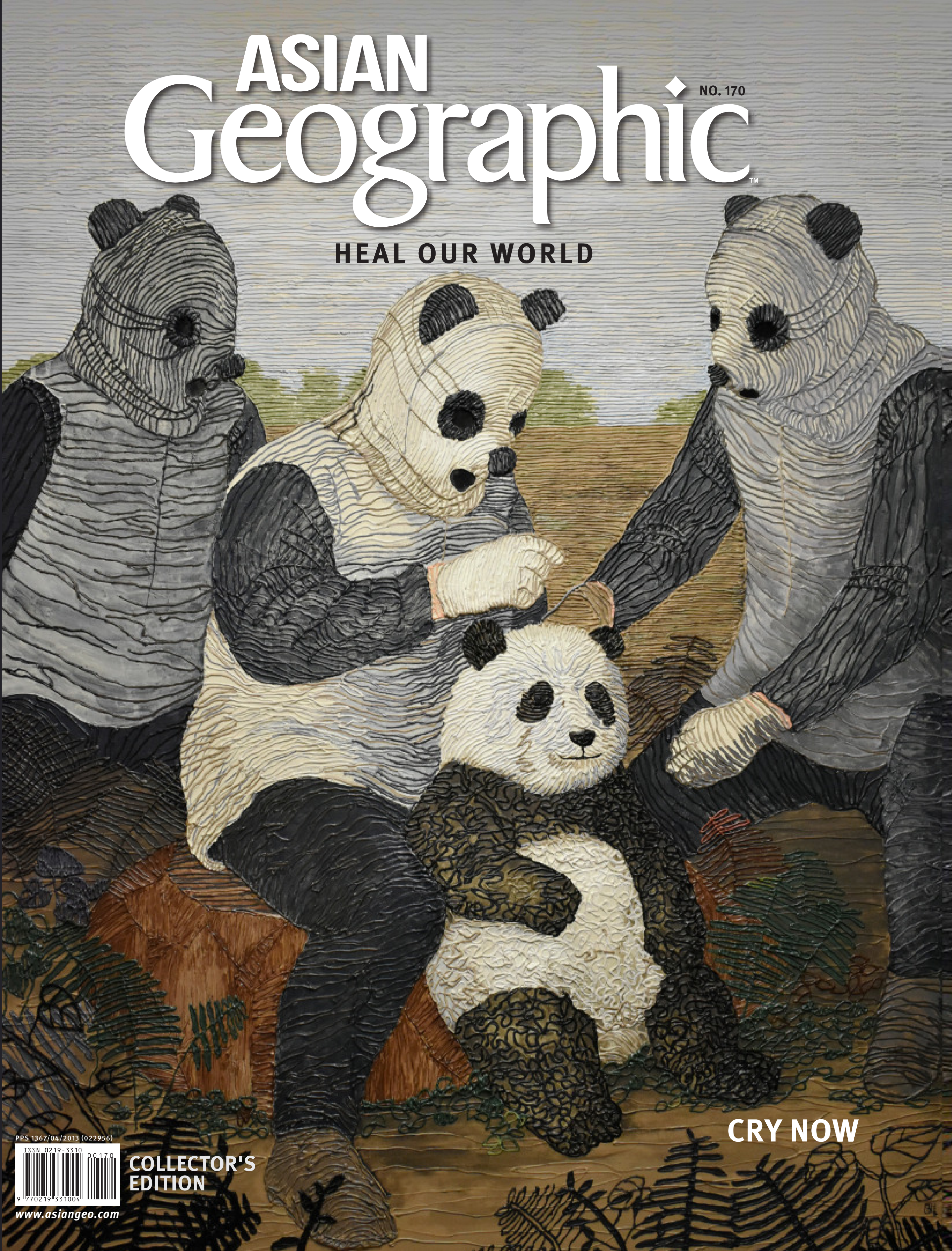
HEAL OUR WORLD

170

ASIAN Geographic™

NO. 170

HEAL OUR WORLD



CRY NOW

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COLLECTOR'S EDITION

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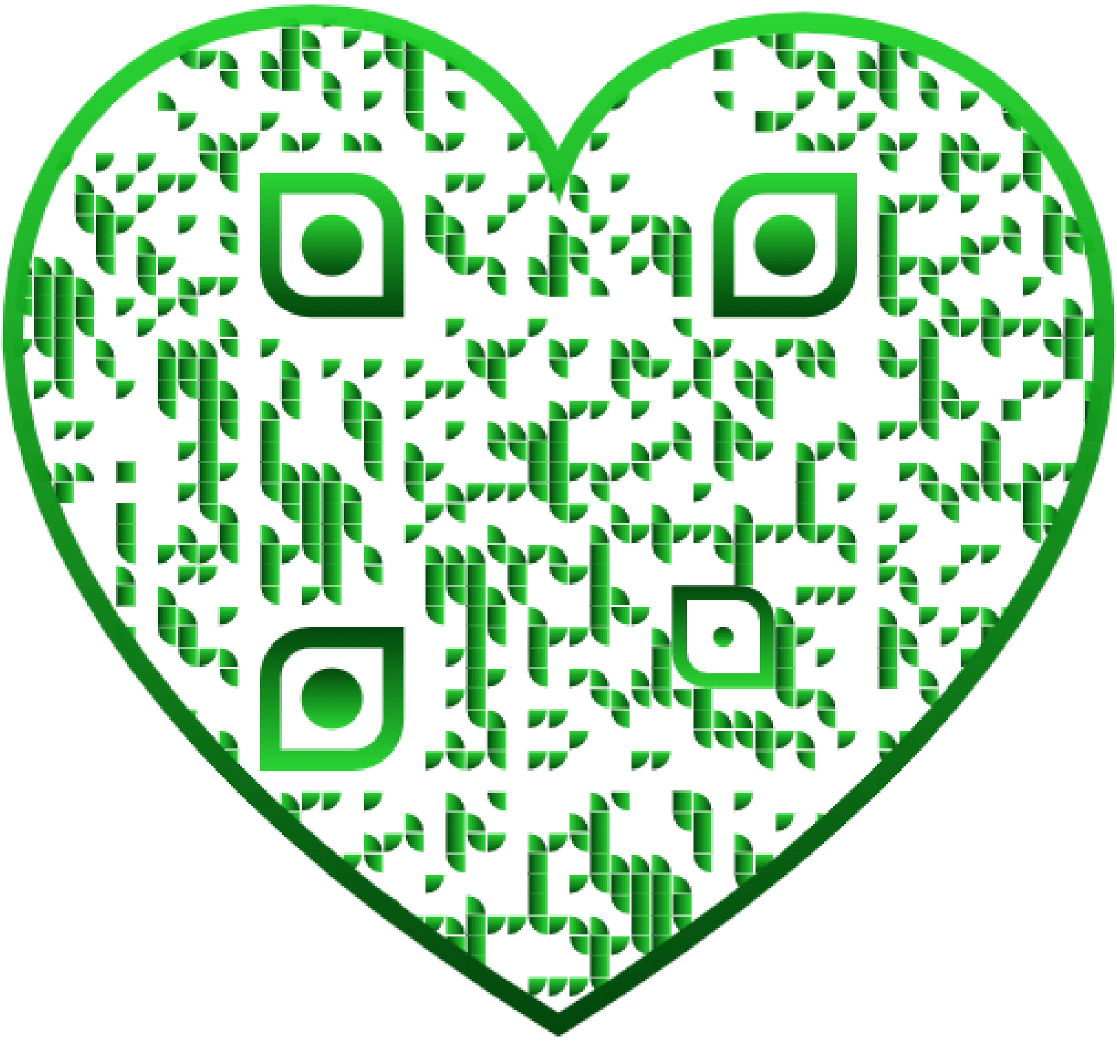

PRESTIGE GALLERY

CRY NOW

10 Jan - 22 Feb 2026

Artists

Chen Chunmu
Desmond Mah
Kanoko Takaya
Pearl C. Hsiung
Rick Shi
Tan Sock Fong
Teo Huey Ling

Curator

Kenneth Liu Chenhao

Curatorial Team

Rick Shi, Audrey Zhang
Yan Li, Freya Zhang
Shuyu Liu

39 Keppel Rd, #03-01
Tanjong Pagar Distripark, Singapore, 089065

Part of
SAW
SINGAPORE ART WEEK

Official Media:
ASIAN Geographic

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Exhibition website: *www.prestigearts.com.sg/cry-now/*

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SUNTEC SINGAPORE HALL 401-402
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DIVE INTO THE UNDERWATER MARVELS OF THE PHILIPPINES

The allure of the Philippines extends far beyond its world-renowned islands and stunning beaches. Beneath this tropical paradise lies a treasure trove of underwater wonders that offers a dreamlike experience for all divers. No wonder it has been holding a fifth-year winning streak as Asia's Leading Dive Destination at the World Travel Awards! Whether you are a seasoned or recreational diver, diving into the Philippines' deep blue waters guarantees a visual feast for all.

BICOL

Heading further south, Bicol holds a treasure in the town of Donsol, Sorsogon, renowned for its encounters with whale sharks, locally referred to as "butanding". From November to June, tourists flock to this area for a chance to spot or even swim alongside these gentle giants! Donsol's commitment to sustainable ecotourism practices ensures the well-being of these gentle giants throughout the whale-watching season.

BOHOL

Bohol may be known for its iconic Chocolate Hills but it is also home to a trove of dive sites in the Philippines. Take a plunge into the thrilling wall dives in Panglao, Balicasag, and Cabilao Islands or even spot dolphins near Pamilacan Island. Dive into the deep among sea turtles and even some occasional whales in Bohol's underwater wonders.

BATANGAS

Just a few hours from Manila, Batangas is a haven for macro photography enthusiasts with some of the Philippines' finest dive sites. Anilao, dubbed the "Nudibranch Capital of the World", boasts an array of colorful sea slugs, seahorses, frogfish, and other tiny critters. Nearby towns like Nasugbu, Calatagan, and San Juan also have diverse dive sites that cater to various preferences – be it recreational, muck, or even blackwater diving, all within reach for a weekend getaway from the country's capital.

CEBU

Cebu presents an array of dive sites perfect for beginners and seasoned divers. Moalboal stands out for its famous Pescador Island where one can experience the world-renowned sardine run, while Malapascua Island is a gem for those in search of thresher shark encounters. These incredible sea creatures, along with abundant reefs and diverse fish species, continue to attract divers all year round.

PALAWAN

The paradisical island of Palawan holds as much wonder above water as it does below. Its pristine waters are brimming with vibrant coral reefs and an array of marine life, including reef fish, turtles, sharks, and even whales. The shipwrecks in Coron offer historical immersion amid unique underwater exploration. And you surely wouldn't want to miss the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park, where an impressive biodiversity of about 700 species of fish and marine mammals and 360 species of corals are on full display.

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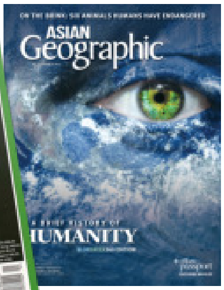
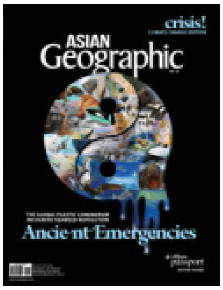
ASIA'S LEADING GEOGRAPHICAL MAGAZINE

ASIAN Geographic
Heartland of Biodiversity

SINCE 1999
Issue 1



Issue 148
BlueGreen360 Edition



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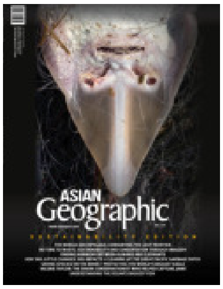
Climate Change Edition



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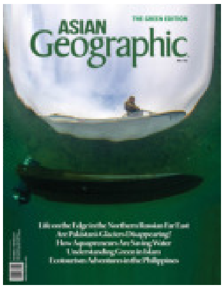

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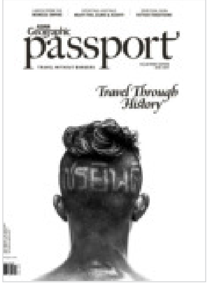


Passport, Issue 121
Collector's Edition

PUBLISHER'S MESSAGE

◆ ◆ ◆

As *ASIAN Geographic* marks its 27th year, we reflect with deep gratitude and renewed purpose on a journey shaped by storytelling, responsibility, and impact.

Climate change remains one of the most defining challenges of our time, particularly in Asia – a region rich in biodiversity, culture, and resilience, yet profoundly vulnerable to environmental change. At *ASIAN Geographic*, caring for the planet has never been a trend; it has been our commitment from the very beginning.

In this special edition, we are proud to celebrate 27 years of *ASIAN Geographic* by spotlighting Asian artists whose creative expressions translate climate change awareness into powerful visual narratives. Through our collaboration with Prestige Gallery, these artists use art as a universal language – one that transcends borders and speaks directly to the heart, inspiring reflection, dialogue, and action.

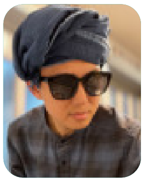
Our association with the International SeaKeepers Society Asia has been especially meaningful. Together, we share a common belief: that education, science, and community engagement are essential to safeguarding our oceans and marine ecosystems for future generations.

We are also honoured to feature compelling wildlife stories in collaboration with This Wild Earth, reminding us that the fate of wildlife is inseparable from our own – and that conservation begins with awareness.

For the past 27 years, *ASIAN Geographic*'s green and blue issues – from climate, forests, wildlife, and oceans to sustainability and conservation – have always been at the forefront of our editorial mission. These themes are not chapters from our past; they remain central to our future.

As we move forward, *ASIAN Geographic* will continue to educate, inspire, and raise awareness on all green and blue matters — because the responsibility to protect our planet belongs to all of us.

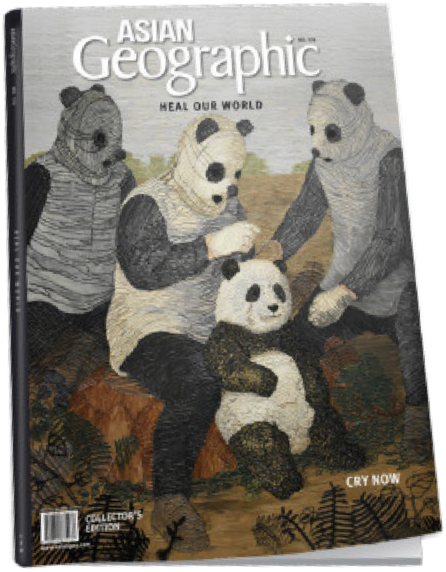
Together, let us continue this journey of understanding, stewardship, and hope.



John Thet
Publisher and Editorial Director, Asian Geographic Magazines Pte Ltd
CEO, Asia Dive Expo (ADEX)
Founder, Underwater 360/Asian Geographic Society
International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame 2024
Historical Diving Society Asia/Ocean Citizen
President, Media Publishers Association Singapore (MPAS)

CELEBRATING 27 YEARS OF BRINGING ASIA TO THE WORLD

ASIAN Geographic brings you the best stories on Asia – from the peaks of the Himalayas to the depths of the Dead Sea. Covering culture, heritage, science, environment, arts, language, literature, adventure, and more, ASIAN Geographic showcases the region in all its beauty and complexity.



Issue 170
Heal Our World
Collector's Edition

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MEDIA OF THE YEAR 2017 (GOLD)

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SINCE 2008

TRAVEL EDITION

ASIAN Geographic Passport is an annual special edition that offers readers a fresh perspective on travel in Asia. Through insightful, compelling travel stories, the magazine covers both the region's most popular cities and its remotest corners. *AG PASSPORT* is also included as a travel section in each bi-monthly issue of our flagship title, *ASIAN Geographic*.

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Asia offers some of the world's greatest natural and man-made wonders. To uncover the hidden gems of this diverse, amazing continent, why not travel with Asian Geographic Expeditions, the experts on Asia? Following the success of the last Himalayas and Silk Road expeditions to China and Uzbekistan, look forward to more exciting and educational travel with *ASIAN Geographic* in the future.

ASIAN Geographic images of asia
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- Short Film of the Year
- Visual Artwork of the Year

Cry Now

By: **Kenneth Liu Chenhao (Curator)**
Artists: **Chen Chunmu, Desmond Mah, Kanoko Takaya,**
Pearl C. Hsiung, Rick Shi, Tan Sock Fong, Teo Huey Ling

Seven Asian artists explore how our disregard for our inner emotional lives is often reflected in an increasing apathy toward the natural world

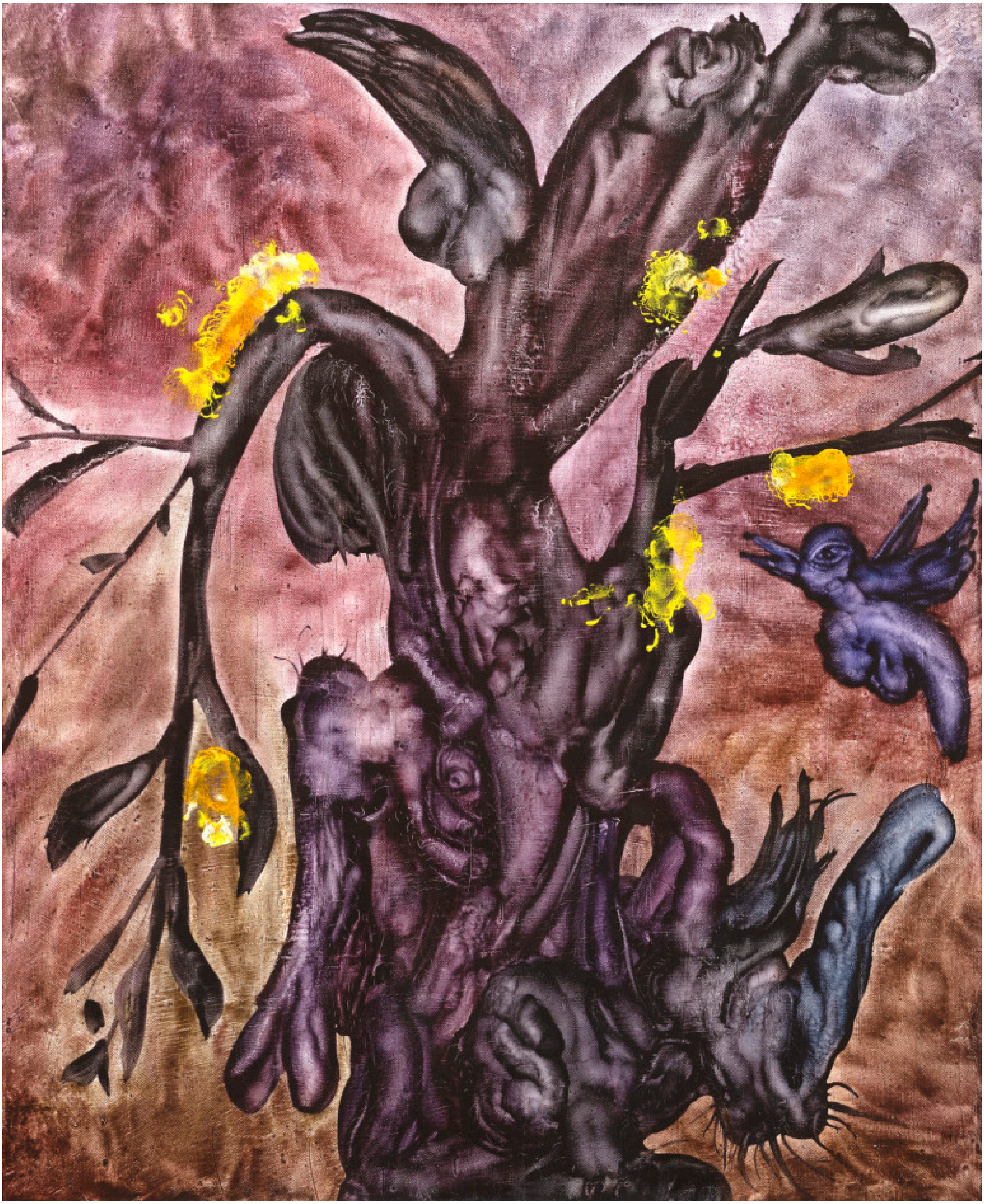
In the noise of constant information and overstimulated senses, many subtle emotions sink beneath the surface. In the hurried rhythm of city life, fragile ecosystems and living beings are quietly pushed to the margins.

"Cry Now" began with a conversation with artist Pearl C. Hsiung. During that exchange, we became aware of a subtle reality: While contemporary society works hard to conceal individual vulnerability, it has also grown increasingly desensitised to the fragility of the environment. There appears to be a connection between the two: Our neglect of our own emotions often mirrors a growing indifference toward the world.

The exhibition takes "crying", a seemingly private emotion and physical response, as its point of departure and invites viewers to reconnect with the deeper currents of feeling, to sense and confront the emotions arising in the present moment, and to recognise the fragile ties between peopleand the natural world.

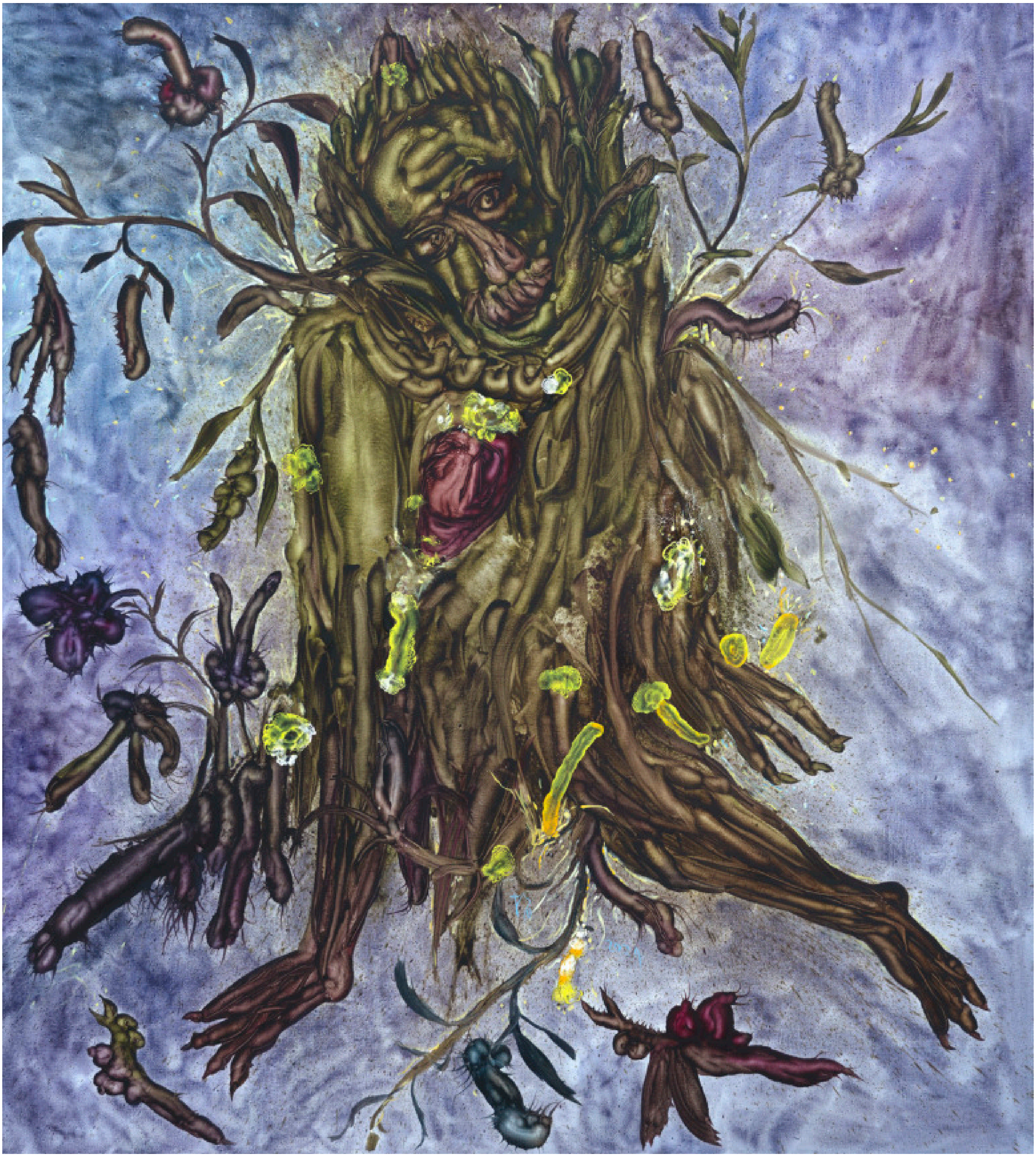
"Cry Now" does not seek to create a heavy or pessimistic atmosphere. Instead, it aims to leverage artistic expression and viewer engagement into a process where vulnerability becomes awareness and heaviness gives way to a strength that is both lighter and enduring.

The exhibition brings together seven artists working across different cultural contexts, with works spanning painting, installation, and sculpture. These creations become channels for emotion, inviting resonance, reflection, and release. They gently encourage viewers to respond to nature and the world through action, and to rediscover the capacity to feel and care for themselves, others, and the environment.



Warm Breeze – 03

2025 **Oil on canvas** **90 x 73 cm** Artist: Chen Chunmu



Withered Tree in Spring – 02

2024 Oil on canvas 200 x 180 cm Artist: Chen Chunmu

“I feel humans, as part of nature and society, are closely connected. In the images, I may borrow a plant or animal, or magnify a human detail to a fine level, showing how they are affected by the environment to reflect or mirror. It is a two-way process.”

– Chen Chunmu

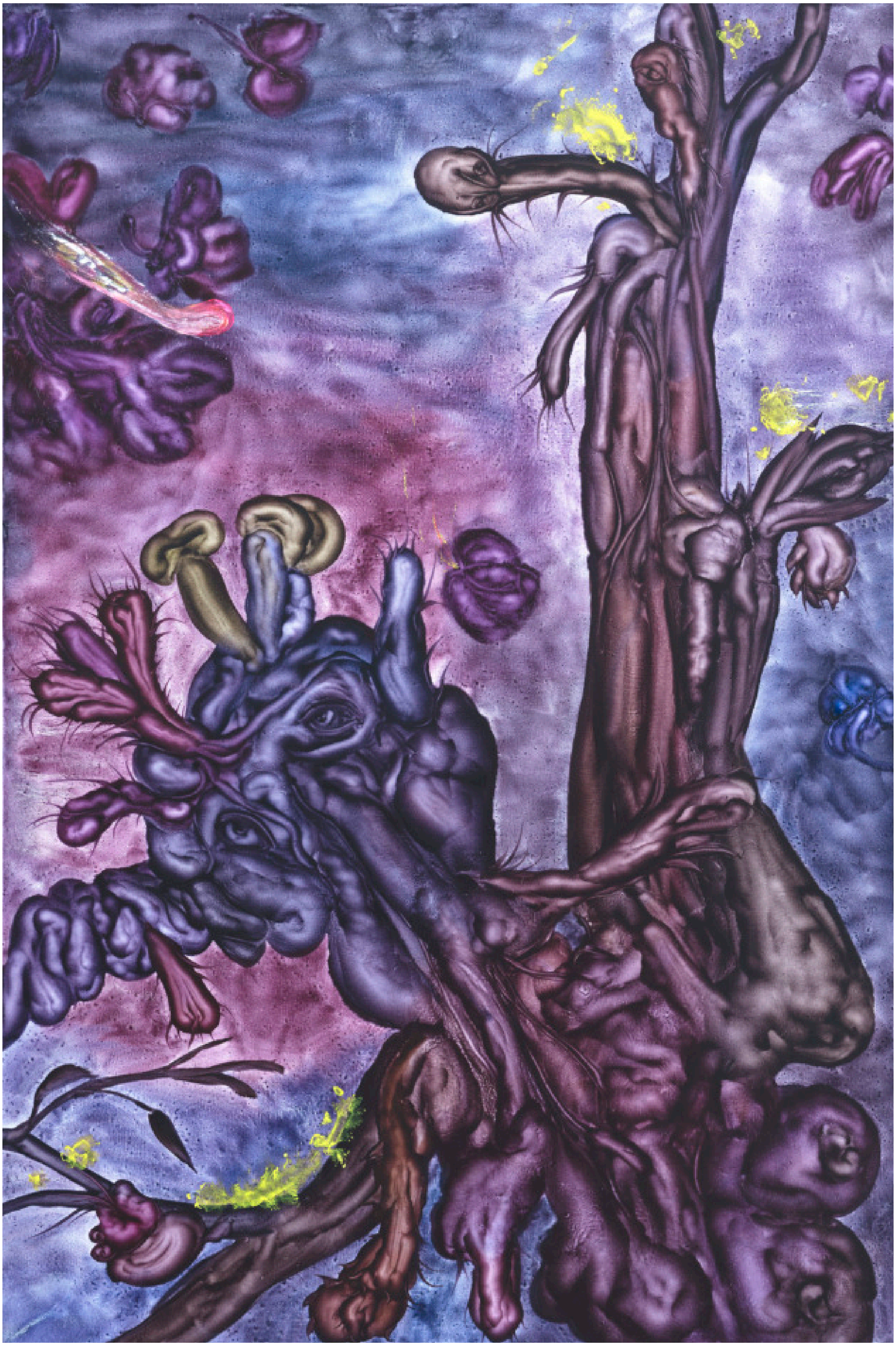
CHEN CHUNMU 陈春木

CHINESE (B. 1981)

Chen Chunmu graduated from the Oil Painting Department of the Fine Arts College of Fujian Normal University in 2003. Mysterious creatures and plants – enigmatic imagery that seems to be derived from the artist’s dreams – characterise his surrealist paintings, which are rendered in subtle colours with flowing brushstrokes. The hybrid beings that Chen creates are a way of reflecting on childhood memories of exploring the deep mountains and forests in his hometown. Yet they also convey the ambivalent feelings experienced by many of his generation about the uncertainty of life in a rapidly changing world.

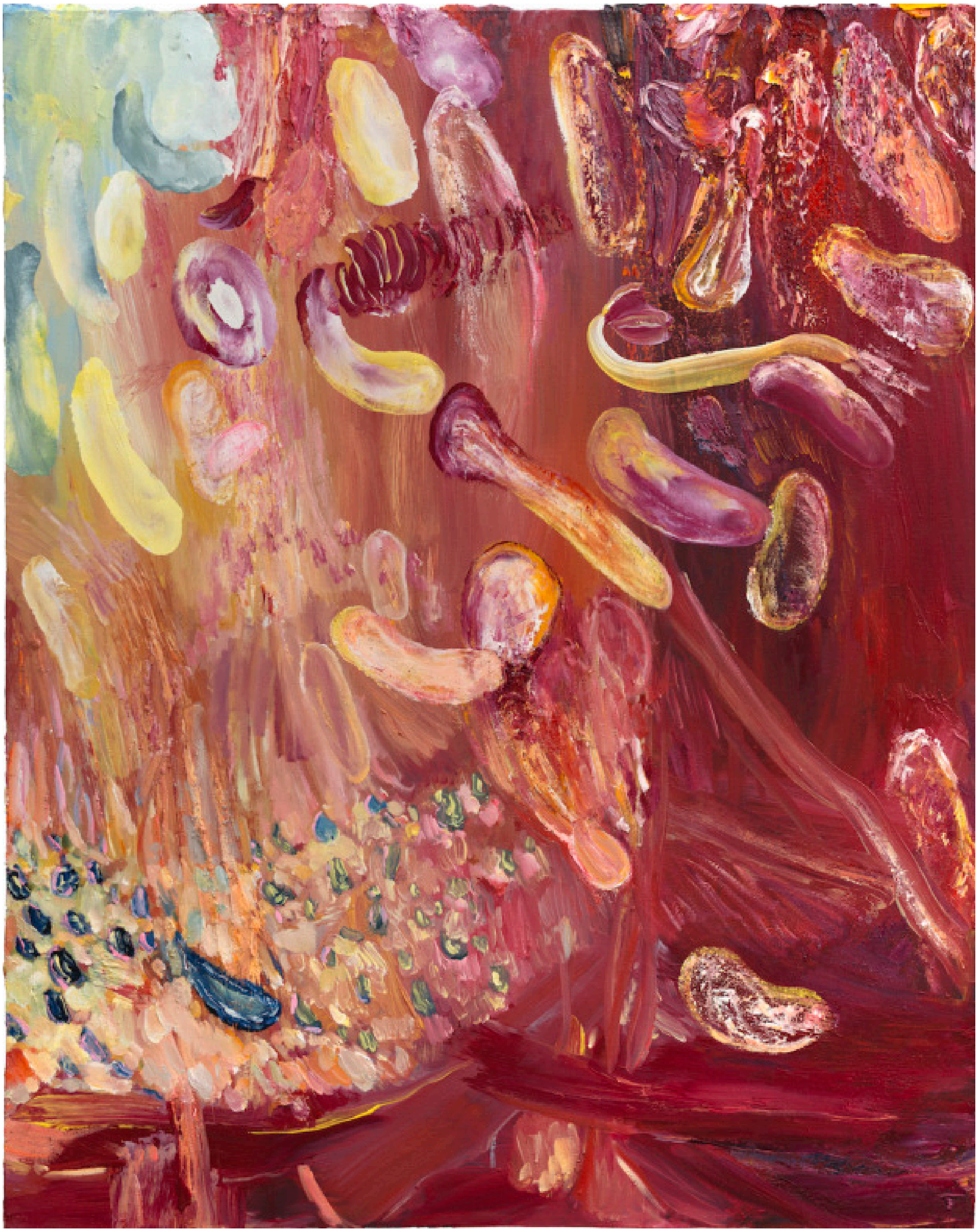
Since 2002, Chen has participated in numerous group exhibitions around the world. His work “Floweriness” was presented at the Song Zhuang Art Museum in Beijing in 2006 and was later acquired by the White Rabbit Gallery in New South Wales, Australia. In 2007, he took part in a show entitled “Gathering: Nine Artists’ Exhibition of Contemporary Art” at Quac Art Space, Beijing, China. In 2010, his works were included in “The Big Bang” at the White Rabbit Gallery and “The World Around: Exhibition of Ten” at the Gehua Museum in Beijing.

In 2013, Chen participated in the First China-ASEAN Art Biennale in Guangxi, China. In 2014, he took part in the Fujianese Contemporary Art Exhibition, Soka Gakkai Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. That year he also showed work in “New Horizons: Young Artist New Works” at 798 Arts Zone in Beijing and “A Life Without the Thrill of the Order” at the Hong Kong Museum of Art. In 2015, his work was included in “Meta Vision: Seven Unique Languages’ Personal History” at the Rainbow Wall Art Gallery in Beijing. In 2024, he became the first Chinese artist to hold a solo exhibition, entitled “Hidden Jungle”, at Museo Casa Natal Picasso in Málaga, Spain. Chen Chunmu lives and works in Beijing.

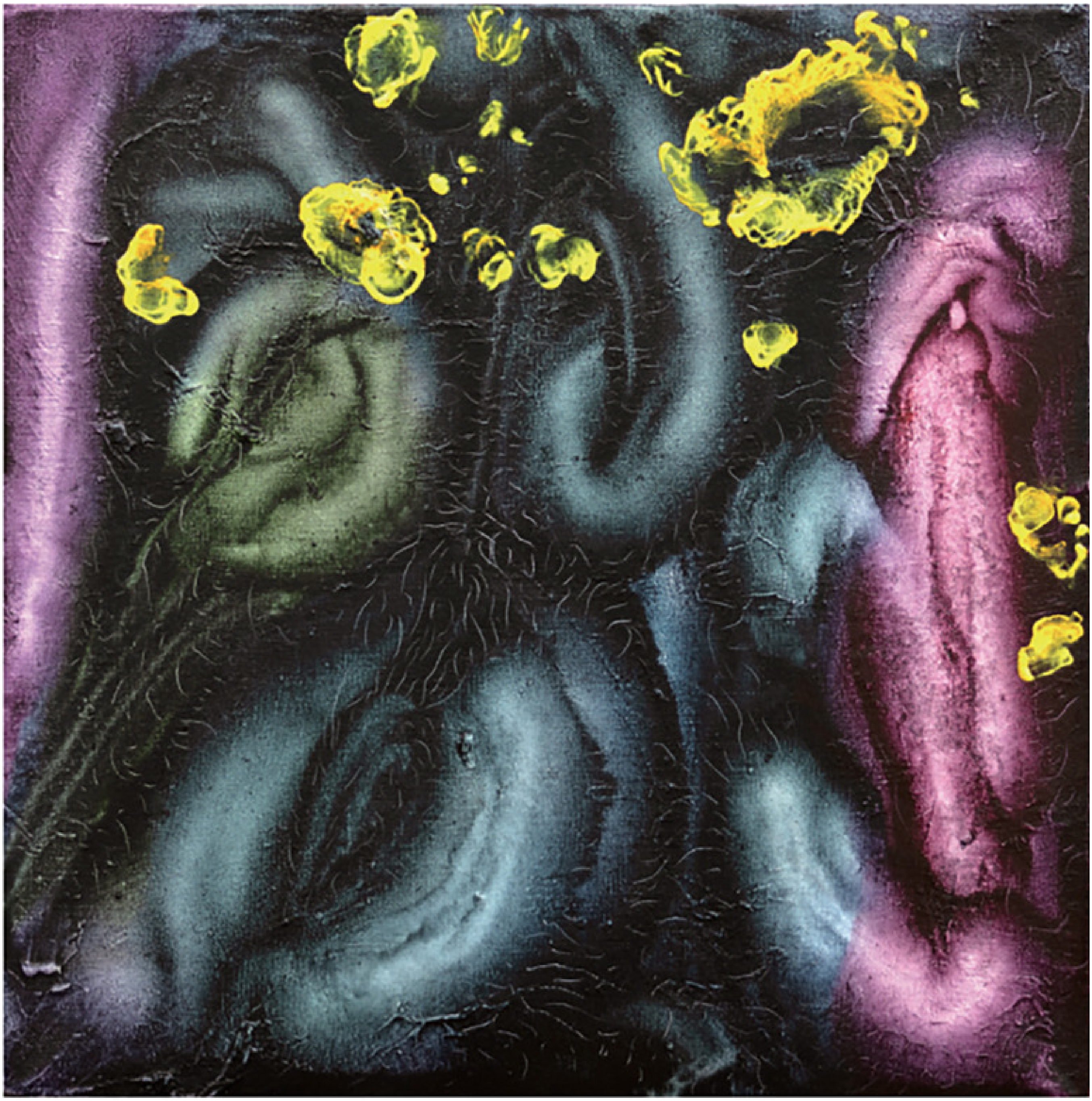


Drifting Growth

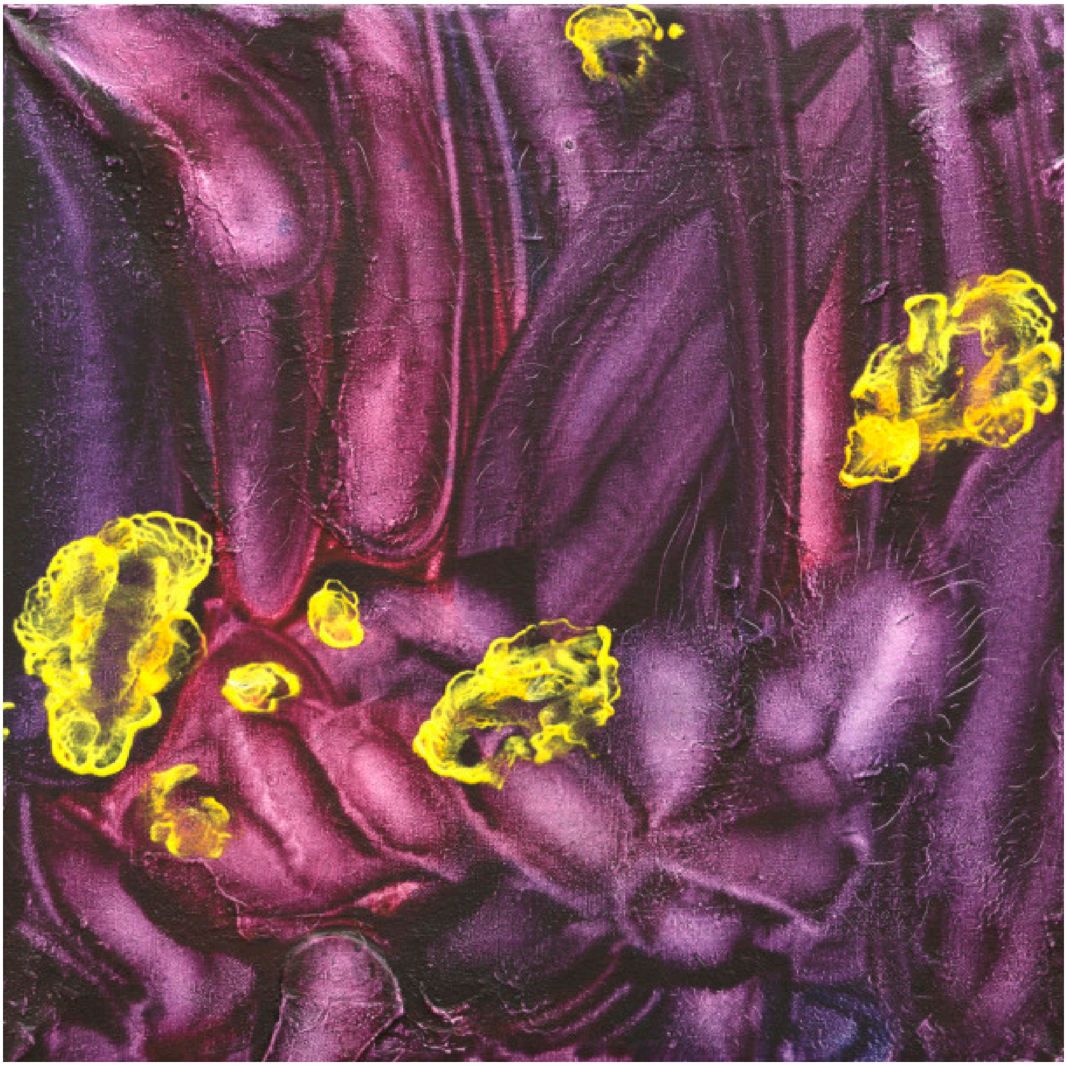
2025 Oil on canvas 150 x 99.5 cm Artist: Chen Chunmu



Rebirth from the Cocoon – 02
2025 **Oil on canvas** **102 x 80 cm** Artist: Chen Chunmu

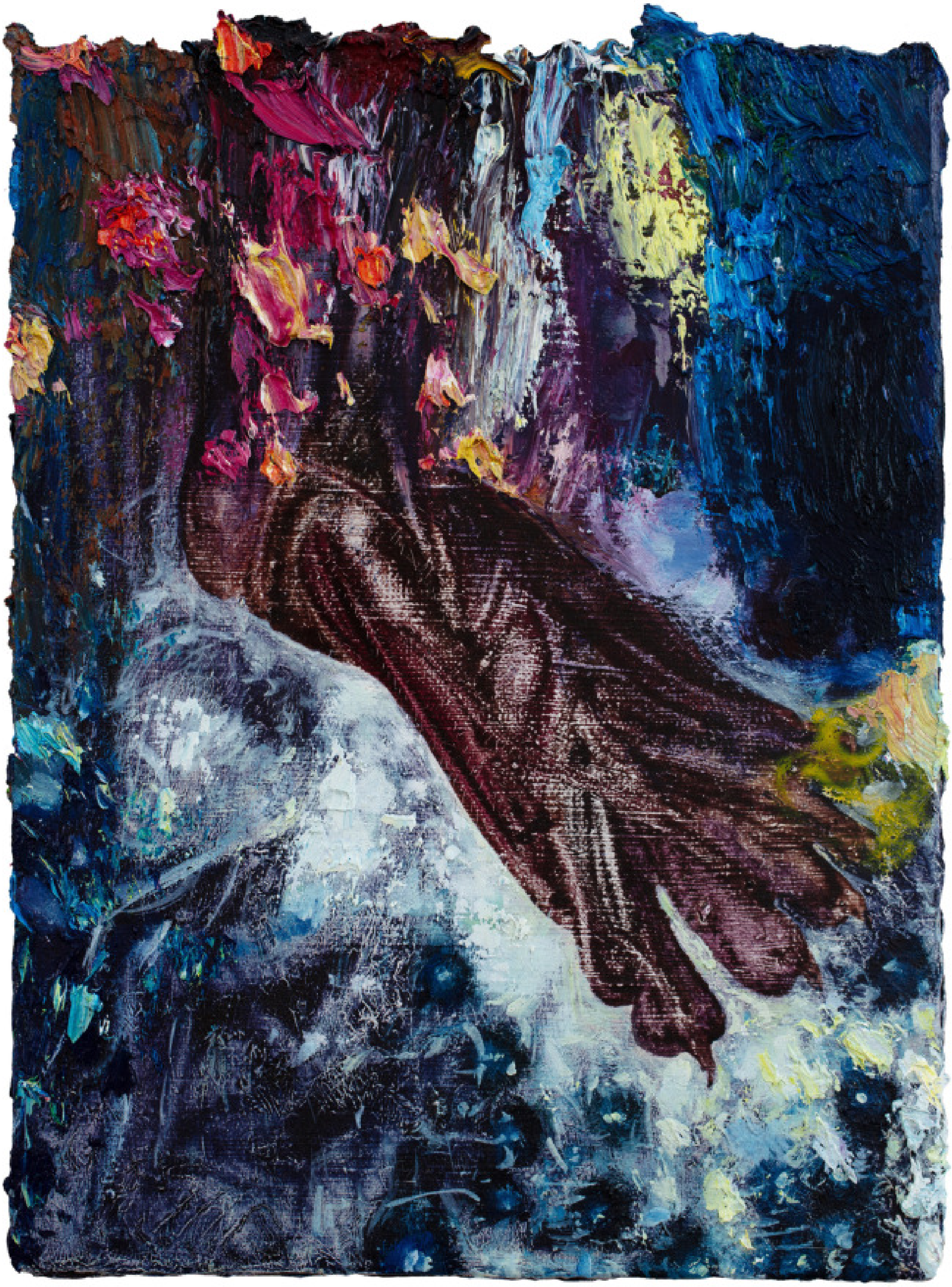


Jungle – Spores
2024 Oil on canvas **25.5 x 25.5 cm** Artist: Chen Chunmu



Jungle – Rhizome

2024 **Oil on canvas** **25.5 x 25.5 cm** Artist: Chen Chunmu



Enough

2019 Oil on canvas 43 x 31 cm Artist: Chen Chunmu

Q&A WITH CHEN CHUNMU

"Cry Now" focuses on the immediate emotions and actions triggered by ecological issues. How do you interpret this exhibition?

Many viewers label my work with terms like "mutated", "dislocated", or "androgynous and uncanny" – all kinds of descriptors for the environments I depict.
That's fine; at least it evokes some emotion. I have always been concerned with environmental issues, especially destructive exploitation. Ultimately, it comes down to human greed – it's hard to avoid. Overanalysing the works can restrict thinking. It's better to focus on one's own experience and perception.

As an artist who has long depicted natural landscapes, what resonances do you see between your work and the theme of "Cry Now"? In your daily life, which ecological or social issues inspire your creative work?

I don't really see it that way, though it's fine if viewers do. I feel humans, as part of nature and society, are closely connected. In the images, I may borrow a plant or animal, or magnify a human detail to a fine level, showing how they are affected by the environment to reflect or mirror. It is a two-way process.

The source of my work is mostly intuitive. It comes from everything around me, including what I see, automatically filtered by the subconscious. Describing intuition is difficult – once described, it becomes weak or distorted. It can be abstract yet have warmth. You need to look and perceive it. Perhaps this is what people call resonance.

How do you express "childhood memories of nature" and "the uncertainty of life" on canvas? In today's rapidly changing world, what do these themes mean to you?

I focus more on uncertainty and the uncertainty within themes. These moments can carry signals of sudden disruption, producing extraordinary effects.

Some critics say your paintings incorporate the spirit of Chinese calligraphy. How do you see this? How does traditional Chinese painting influence your work?

I do not oppose and even appreciate viewers' "misinterpretations" or divergent readings. Controversy exists. We all grow up within traditional contexts; this allows one to accumulate energy and better express or interpret society. Facing it makes the artist clearer..

What do you hope viewers take from your work regarding nature and life?

All kinds of responses are fine, even misreadings.

Which artists or ideas have influenced you most? How have they inspired your work?

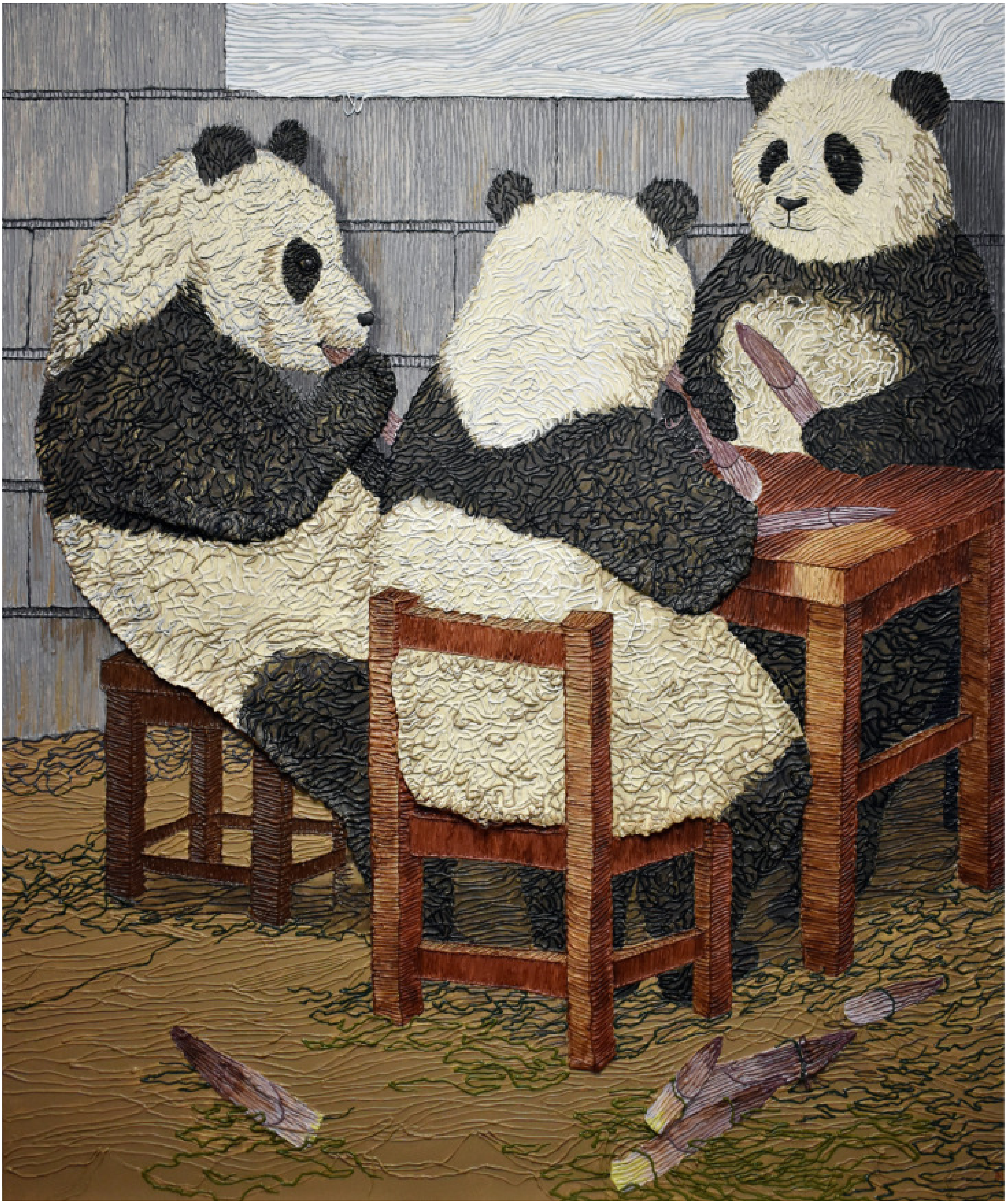
I used to focus on specific individuals; now I don't.
All my experiences are valuable. Even children's behaviours or ideas can stimulate and inspire me because they are pure.

In recent years, the world has undergone drastic changes in health, ecology, and society. How do you see the role of an artist's sensitivity today? How do you transform the external ecological environment into personal reflection or creative motivation?

Not all artists are sensitive. How I express myself is present in these different works – you can perceive it, but underneath, there is an intense collision at the cellular level. The direction of exploration changes constantly, because we cannot know what tomorrow will bring.

In your new series, purple dominates and plants take on various shapes. Where do these inspirations come from?

From nature's roots and rhizomes, and from the colourful, flowing light of society.

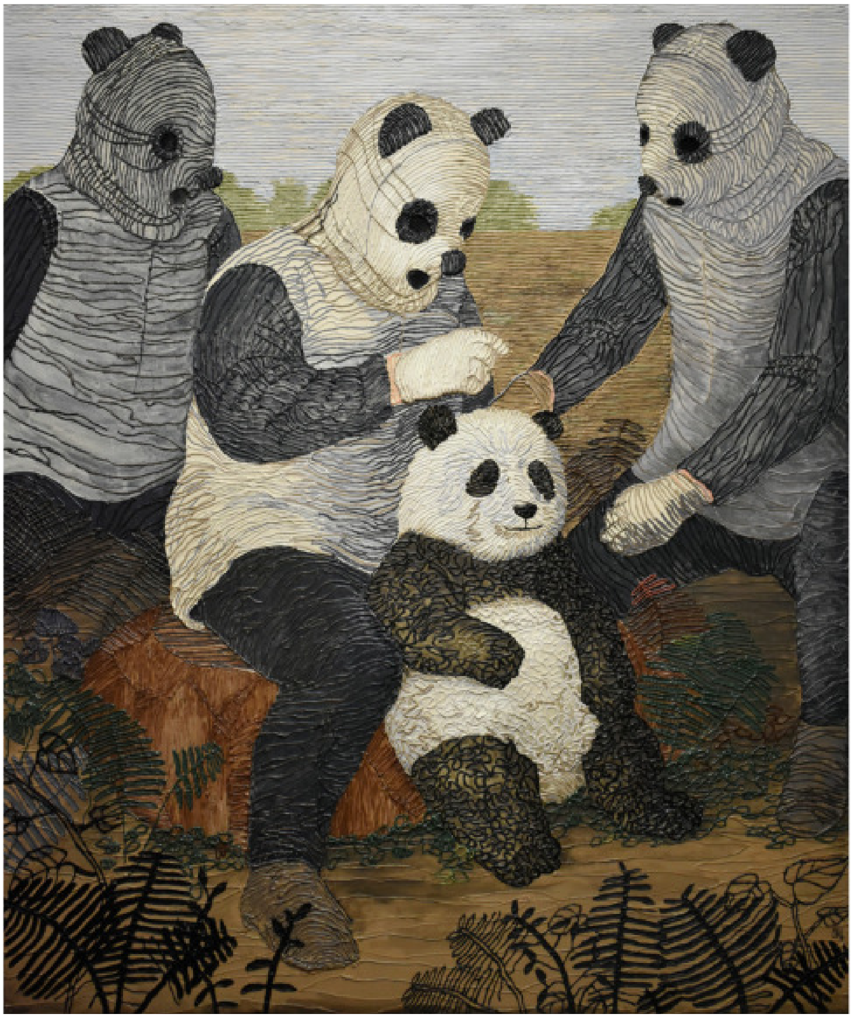


Lunch at This Zoo

2025 Acrylic and mixed media on canvas 120 × 100 × 2 cm Artist: Desmond Mah

“For the panda, I use careful composition, controlled framing, and symbolic cues drawn from various enclosures to emphasise containment and spectacle. The panda’s body is positioned in a way that fills the frame yet feels enclosed, creating a visual tension between its physical presence and the invisible boundaries that restrict it.”

– Desmond Mah



The Workers in That Enclosure

2025 Acrylic and mixed media on canvas 120 × 100 × 2 cm Artist: Desmond Mah

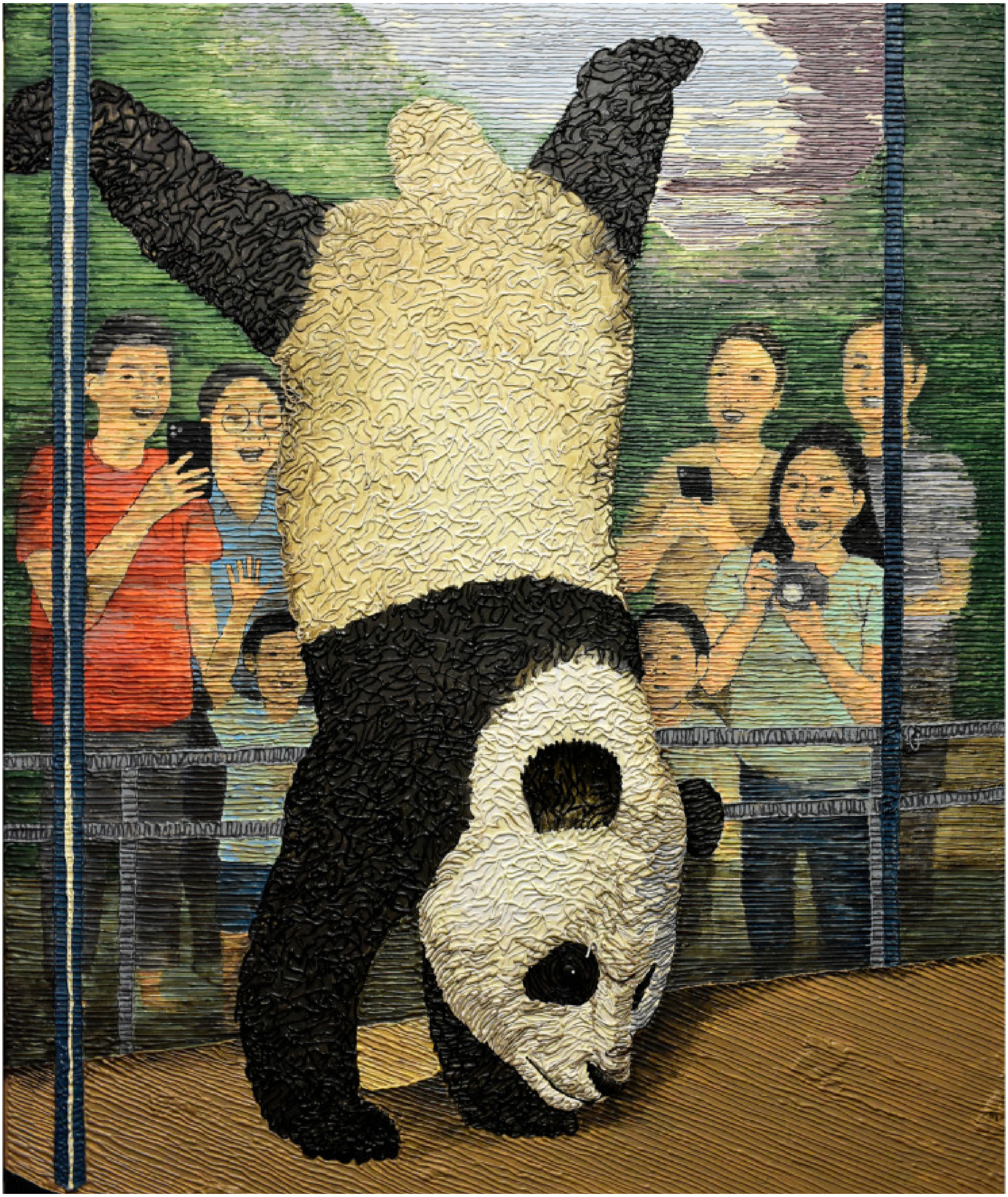
DESMOND MAH 马福民

SINGAPOREAN-AUSTRALIAN (B. 1974)

Desmond Mah draws on the aesthetics of natural history illustration to examine colonial narratives. His work prompts broader conversations on decolonisation, cultural memory, and the politics of representation. Through his paintings, Mah addresses the entrenched structures of “othering” that sustain ideas of superiority and control, along with the systems and ideologies that uphold them. Incorporating expanded elements such as QR-linked audio, his practice creates immersive experiences. This multidisciplinary approach is shaped by his attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, which favours experimentation over routine.

Mah earned a BA (Hons) in Painting from Loughborough University, UK (1998), supported by a Lee Foundation (Singapore) scholarship, and a diploma from Lasalle College of the Arts, Singapore (1997). Prior to beginning his practice in 2017, he worked in art education (secondary schools) and horticulture. Of Hainanese, Kinmen, and Singaporean descent, Mah migrated to Australia as a teenager in the 1980s, a period of heightened hostility towards the Asian diaspora in Boorloo (Perth).

Mah’s achievements include the E.SUN Bank Special Selection Prize (Taiwan, 2022) and the Southern Buoy Studios Portrait Prize (Australia, 2021). He has been awarded grants and participated in numerous exhibitions, residencies, and commissions, notably the Fremantle Arts Centre Studio programme (2023) and two Red Gate Residencies (Beijing, 2018). His works are held in notable collections. Exhibition highlights include Inside-Out Art Museum (Beijing, 2025), finalist for the Collie Art Prize (Australia, 2025), and the Indian Ocean Craft Triennial at Mossenson Galleries (Australia, 2024). Mah is based in Perth, Western Australia.



Amusing Antic

2025 Acrylic and mixed media on canvas 120 × 100 × 3.5 cm Artist: Desmond Mah

Q&A WITH DESMOND MAH

"Cry Now" directs the audience's attention towards the current emotions and actions related to ecological protection. How do you understand the exhibition?

I understand "Cry Now" as an invitation to confront the contradictions in our relationship with the natural world. It is a reminder that ecological crises are already unfolding. The exhibition foregrounds emotional urgency by placing the viewer in a position where they must reconsider their own distance, complicity, and desire for comfort. For me, this emotional terrain is important, because ecological protection often becomes a performance rather than a lived commitment. "Cry Now" asks us to sit with discomfort rather than resolve it too quickly.

In your daily life, are there any specific ecological issues or social phenomena that spark your creative inspiration?

Yes. I am drawn to moments where human intervention becomes visible in the lives of animals. This includes conservation programmes, suburban human wildlife conflicts, roadkill, eradication schemes, and the way museums or media frame species survival. These situations reveal how much of nature exists under human management. I also observe how narratives about nature intertwine with national identity, nostalgia, and economics. These everyday encounters often prompt questions about power, loss, and storytelling, which become the seeds of my paintings.

As an artist born in Singapore and based in Australia, how has the cross-regional experience shaped your response to the exhibition?

Moving between Singapore and Australia makes me sensitive to how different societies define nature. Singapore cultivates a manicured, contained environment shaped by planning and efficiency, while Australia presents vast landscapes where the ecological past is still felt, though deeply altered by colonisation. This movement between two very different ecological imaginaries gives me perspective on the unevenness of environmental care and the cultural values that shape it. It also helps me reflect on my own position within global ecological systems and the inherited ideas I have learned to examine more critically.

In your artworks, you depict two contrasting states of life, a panda living under protection in a zoo, and a wild European red fox that has died. What do these two scenes stand for in your art? Do they share any common meaning or connection?

The two scenes represent two extremes in the human relationship with animals. The panda is an icon of global affection, conservation, and diplomacy, yet its survival depends heavily on human engineering, captive breeding, and carefully controlled environments. The red fox, by contrast, is a familiar species often labelled as invasive in Australia and treated with hostility. Its presence is tolerated until it is not, and its death is rarely questioned.

They share a common thread. Both animals reveal how human values decide which species deserve care and which do not. They show that survival and extinction are human-shaped outcomes, influenced by politics, economics, sentiment, and fear. The panda and the fox become mirrors, reflecting how we construct meaning around species in ways that often have little to do with the animals themselves.

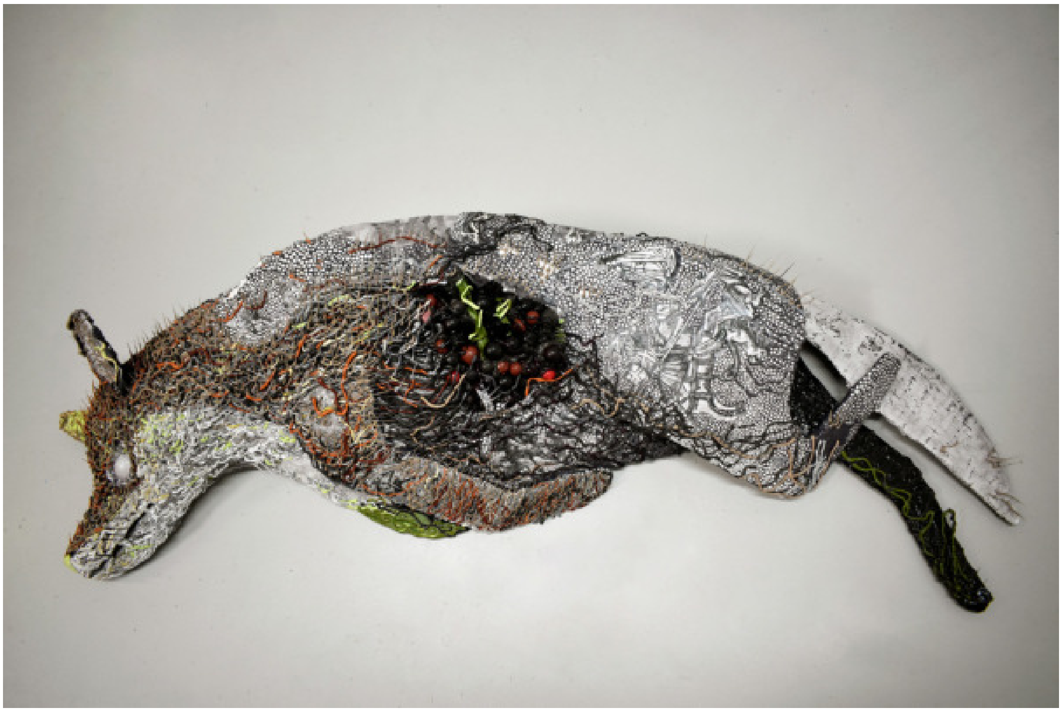
How do your choices of medium, composition, and symbolic meanings contribute to expressing these two different states of being?

I work with natural illustration aesthetics drawn from scientific drawings, museum displays, and natural history archives. This allows me to position the subjects within a visual language that historically shaped how humans understood and controlled nature. Both works express my tactile line painting technique, which I developed from memories of watching my mother sew for a living.

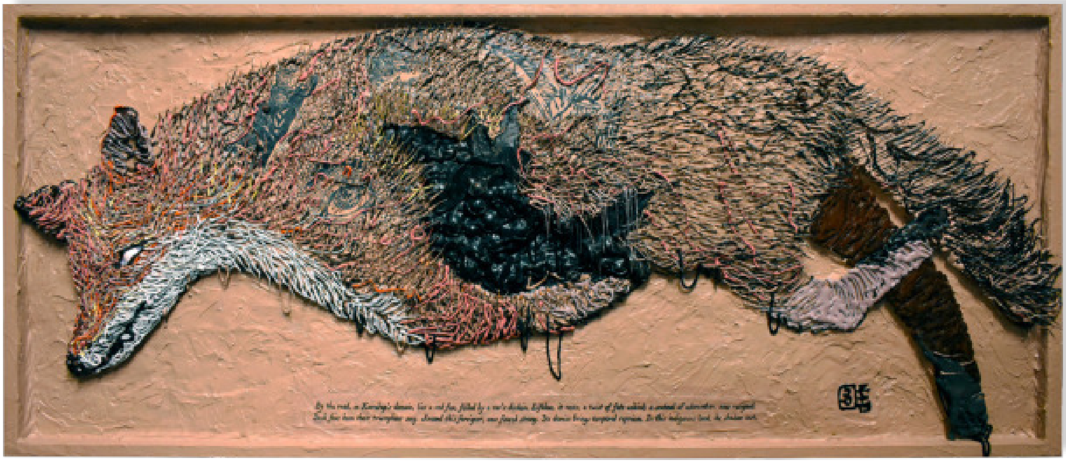
For the panda, I use careful composition, controlled framing, and symbolic cues drawn from various enclosures to emphasise containment and spectacle. The panda's body is positioned in a way that fills the frame yet feels enclosed, creating a visual tension between its physical presence and the invisible boundaries that restrict it. The viewing glass, railings, and staged habitat become structural motifs that signal both protection and confinement. I also employ a deliberate, almost theatrical framing, where the panda is held within a constructed tableau that mirrors how enclosures choreograph encounters for visitors. This compositional control mirrors the institutional control over the animal itself.

Lighting, colour, and gesture are all calibrated to heighten this sense of a mediated experience. The panda becomes simultaneously a charismatic symbol and a carefully managed subject of human fascination. By foregrounding these constructed elements, the work points to the contradictions of conservation performed as spectacle: The intimacy promised to the public is built upon a distance enforced upon the animal.

The fox I depict was a roadkill I encountered on the roadside. Its death was abrupt and quiet, an unceremonious end in a landscape where the species is often seen as invasive and expendable. I chose to repurpose Zhizha, an Asian funeral papercraft traditionally used to honour the dead, to document its lived life. This gesture acknowledges the fox as a being shaped by human decisions and ecological histories. In Australia, the red fox has no natural predators and is responsible for the deaths of many native species, which places it at the centre of debates about management and eradication. By using a ritual material associated with mourning, I wanted to complicate the narrative and offer a moment of recognition for a creature caught in the tensions between belonging, survival, and control.



The Roadkill I Saw Leaving Koorabup (Denmark, Western Australia) and Later in My Mind
2023 Acrylic, mixed media, print, rice paper 16 x 86 x 40 cm Artist: Desmond Mah



A Tyrant at Koorabup
2024 Oil, mixed media on rice paper board 38 x 87 x 3 cm Artist: Desmond Mah

What kinds of audience experiences, reflections or actions do you hope to inspire?

I hope viewers pause and begin to question their assumptions about conservation, rarity, and value. I want them to recognise the emotional distance that often exists between us and the animals we claim to protect. Ideally, the work opens space for reflection about responsibility, about how species are managed or mythologised, and about the colonial histories embedded in ecological narratives. I hope the viewer becomes more aware of the structures that shape ecological encounters.

Which artists' ideas or artworks have influenced you the most, and how do their ideas continue to inspire your work?

I draw inspiration from natural illustration artists who document natural worlds through various means. Their works remind me that representation is never neutral, and that visual languages inherited from colonial science continue to shape how nature is understood today. These influences encourage me to approach animals not as isolated subjects, but as part of larger political and historical structures.

Given the dramatic global changes in recent years (across health, ecology, and society), how do you see the importance of artistic sensitivity in the present?

It enables us to notice what is often overlooked. It helps us perceive relationships and patterns that remain invisible in policy or data. In times of instability, art can slow down the rush towards solutions and instead highlight the emotional, ethical, and historical dimensions of our choices. It offers a way to reflect on the gap between what we know and how we act, encouraging deeper attention and reaction.

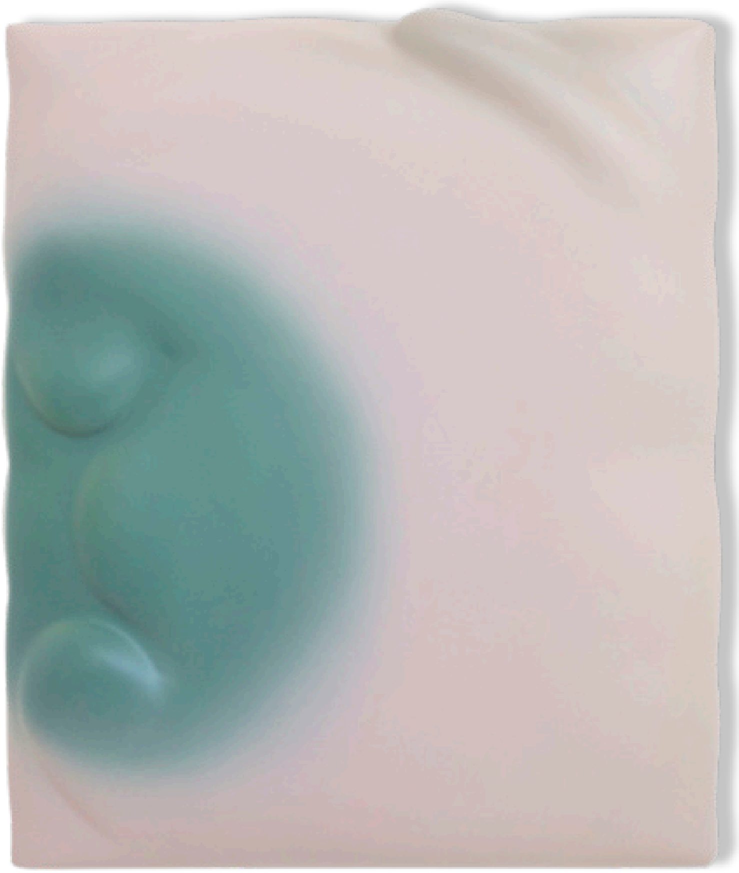
How do you translate external ecological conditions into personal reflection or creative expression?

I begin with observation. I watch how animals are framed, handled or spoken about. I trace the histories that inform these encounters. These external conditions then become internal questions about care, loss, and the narratives I have inherited from my upbringing and education. Through painting, I translate these reflections into images that hold contradictions without resolving them. This process allows me to explore my own position within broader ecological stories.

How do you see the themes of "species conservation" and "ecological art" evolving in the future? In which direction will you continue to explore?

These themes will become increasingly tied to questions of ethics, responsibility, and historical accountability. Species conservation will continue to reveal contradictions between environmental ideals and political realities. Ecological art will likely move towards examining systems, infrastructures, and the uneven distribution of care.

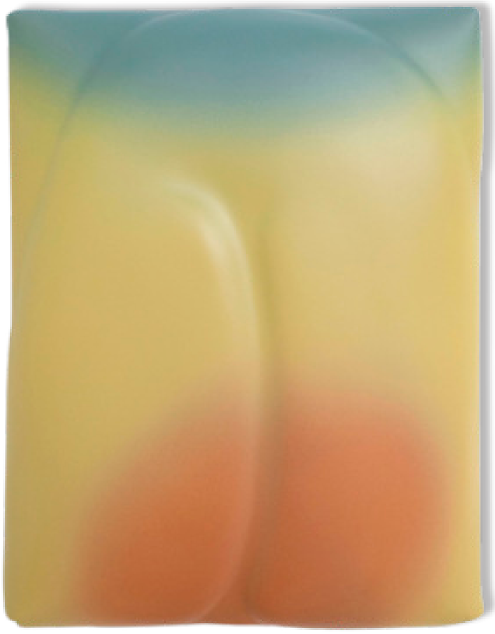
My own direction will continue to explore the emotional and narrative spaces where humans and animals meet. I will keep working with natural illustration aesthetics, natural documentary language, and the histories embedded within them. Through these approaches, I hope to question how we construct meaning around species, and how these constructions shape the futures we imagine.



Yoin

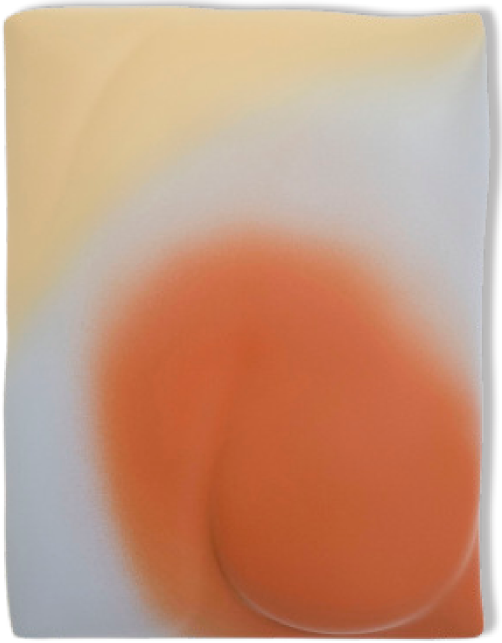
2025 Acrylic, Japanese clay, resin, putty, epoxy on stitched foam-filled canvas 48 × 40 × 7 cm

Artist: Kanoko Takaya



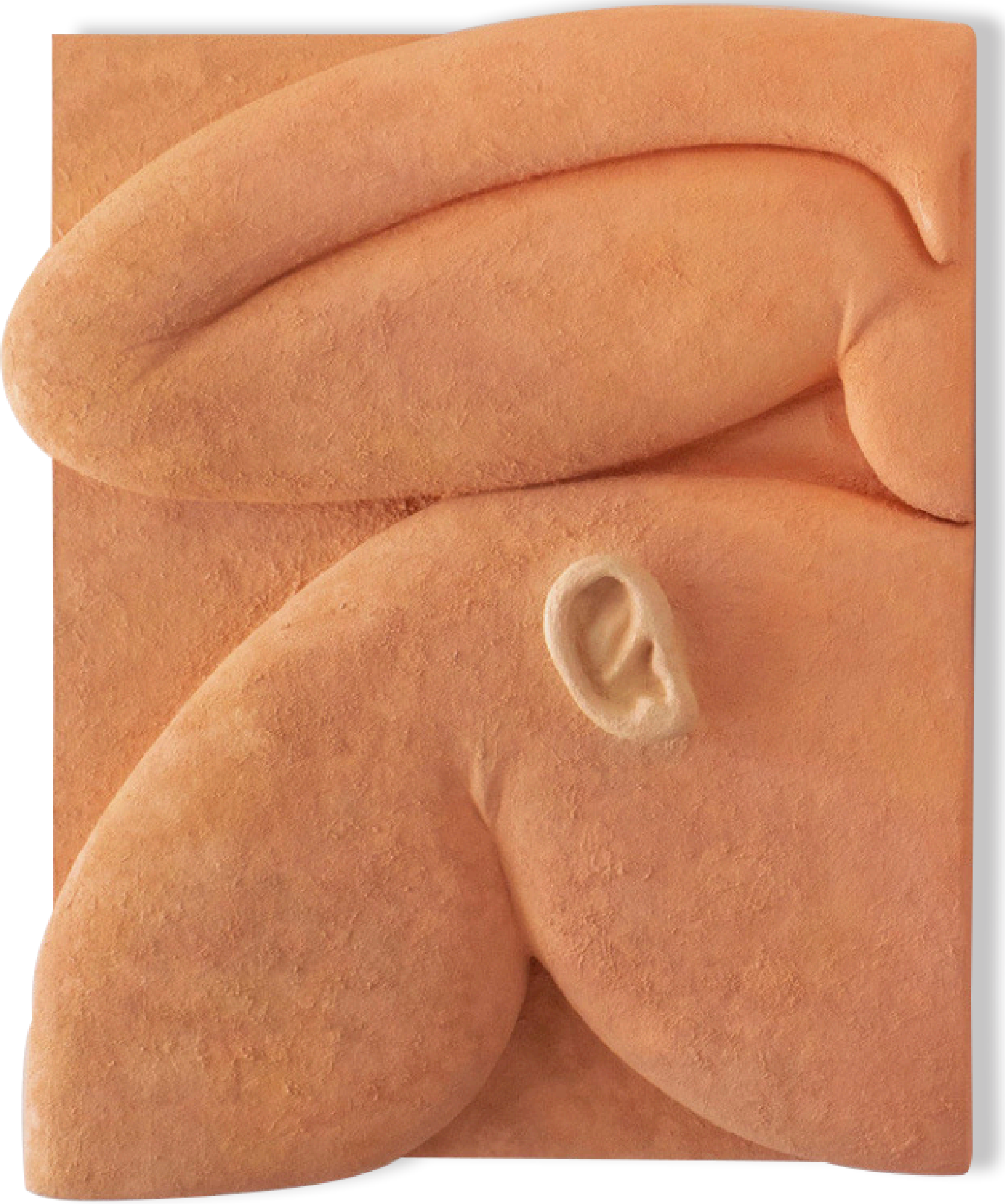
Yuuhi

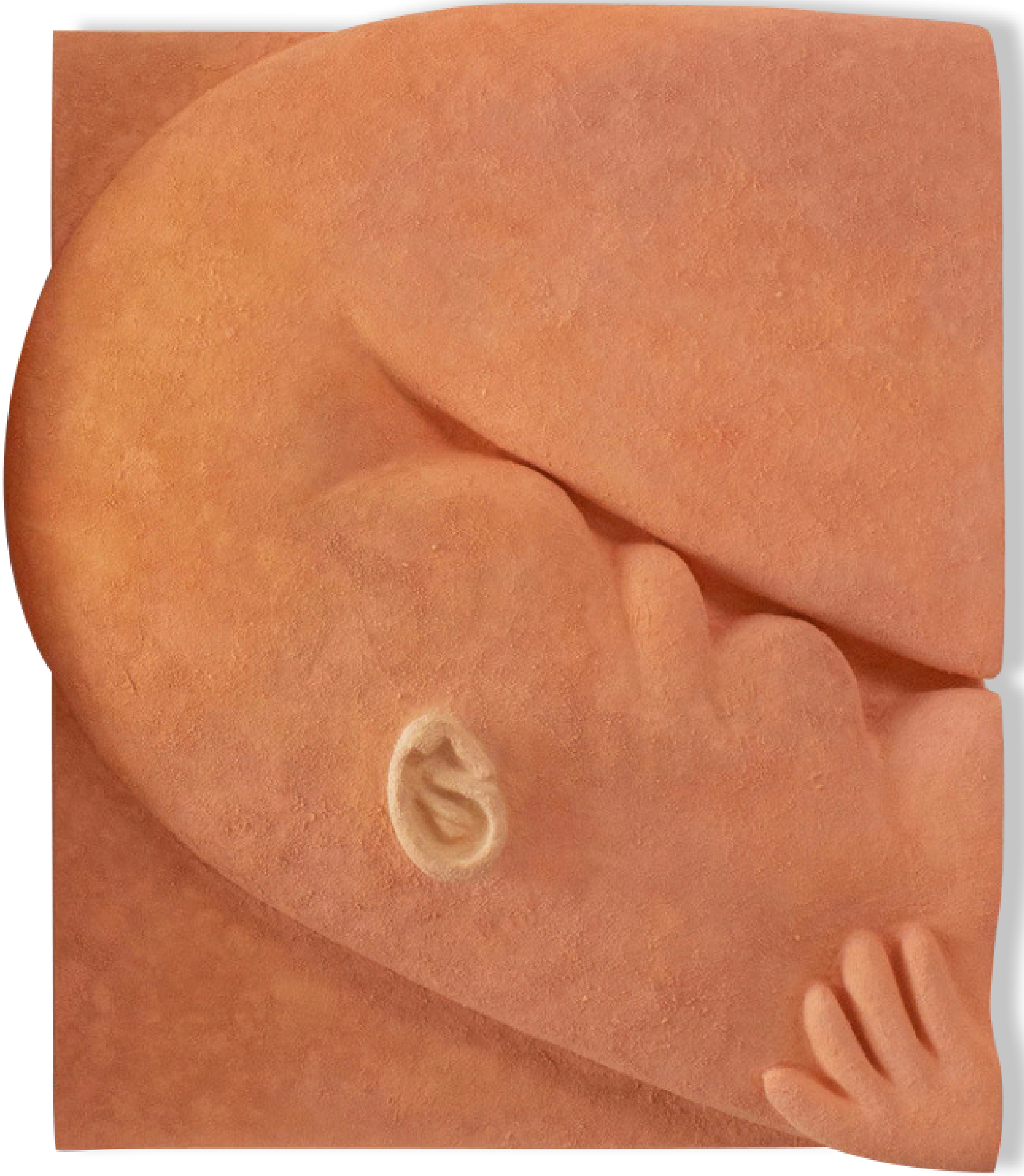
2025 Acrylic, Japanese clay, resin, putty, epoxy on stitched foam-filled canvas 28.5 x 22.5 x 6.5 cm
Artist: Kanoko Takaya



Koyake

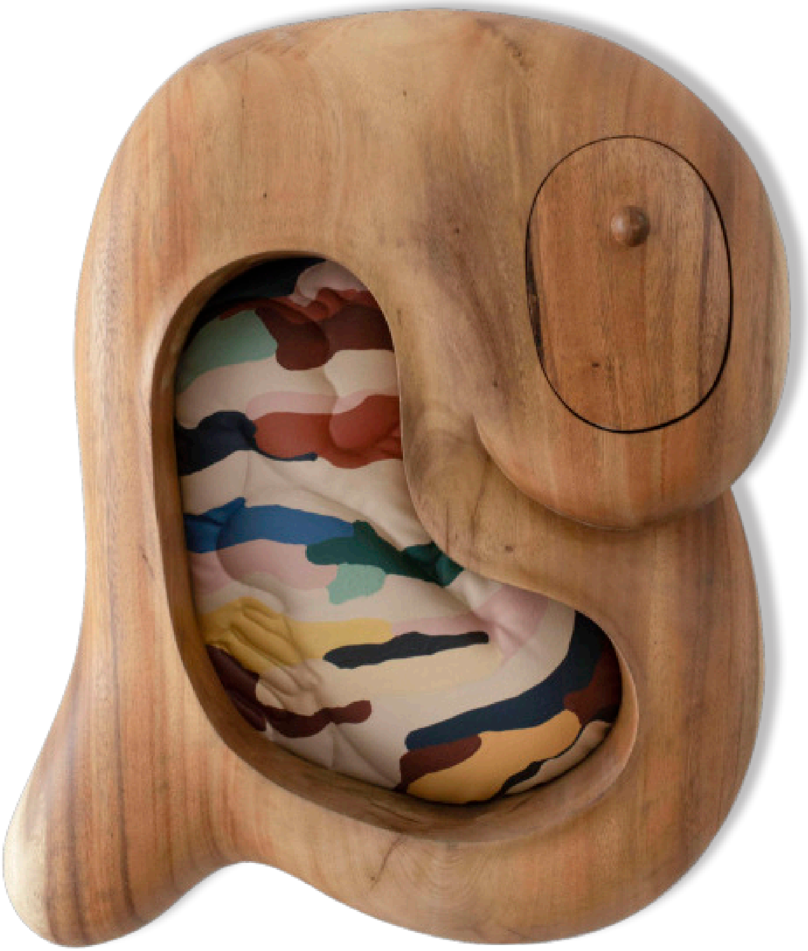
2025 Acrylic, Japanese clay, resin, putty, epoxy on stitched foam-filled canvas 29 x 22.5 x 8 cm
Artist: Kanoko Takaya





Gyutt and Kiku

2023 **Mixed media on wood** 112 x 94 x 19 cm Artist: Kanoko Takaya



Kokoro Simau

2024 **Acrylic, foam-stitched canvas and wood** **50 x 42 x 9.5 cm** Artist: Kanoko Takaya

> ***"Working with artificial materials such as resin and styrene has made me increasingly aware of the contradictions between convenience and environmental impact, as well as the sense of constraint felt during the creative process. This awareness has led me to also incorporate natural materials, such as coconut fibre and paper, into my practice."***
>
> – Kanoko Takaya

KANOKO TAKAYA 高屋 佳乃子

JAPANESE (B. 1991)

Kanoko Takaya is an artist from Kyoto, Japan whose works explore the relationship between the human body, emotions, and self-discovery. She expresses these themes through the use of tactile and organic forms, as well as w a vast exploration of materials. In 2016, Kanoko moved to Indonesia, where she began to focus on introspection and discovering her inner self as an individual. In the process, she began using a variety of materials in her practice as a medium of self-expression. Her work attempts to transcend the boundaries of painting and sculpture through her constant experimentation and unconventional use of techniques. Kanoko's works are characterised by curves and textures that evoke associations with the human body. As a result, her works often offer a sense of familiarity and intimacy.

At the core of her work is the pursuit of discovering the inner self through intuitive expression and conscious decisions. By engaging with shapes, symbols and textures in habitual ways, she is free to create visual rhythms that convey her ever-changing state of mind. Kanoko's approach embraces her ability to be emotional yet rational with her artistic process. Kanoko is based in Bali, Indonesia.

Q&A WITH KANOKO TAKAYA

"Cry Now" directs the audience's attention towards the current emotions and actions related to ecological protection. How do you understand the exhibition?

For me, "Cry Now" is an exhibition that invites us to face ecological issues as realities already unfolding within our bodies and emotions, rather than as abstract concepts. I see the human body and emotions not as something separate from nature, but as part of an ecosystem that is constantly responding to its environment. Through forms that suggest bodily surfaces and inner layers, I try to visualise how external changes affect our inner states, and how the boundary between them becomes unstable. In this sense, "Cry Now" encourages us to reconsider coexistence and our relationship with the environment.

In your daily life, are there any specific ecological issues or social phenomena that spark your creative inspiration?

My practice does not begin with a conscious focus on specific environmental or social issues, but rather emerges through intuitive action. By forming shapes, engaging physically with materials, and reflecting on the work after it is completed, I reconsider the human body and emotions not as entities separate from nature, but as part of an ecosystem that is constantly responding to its environment.

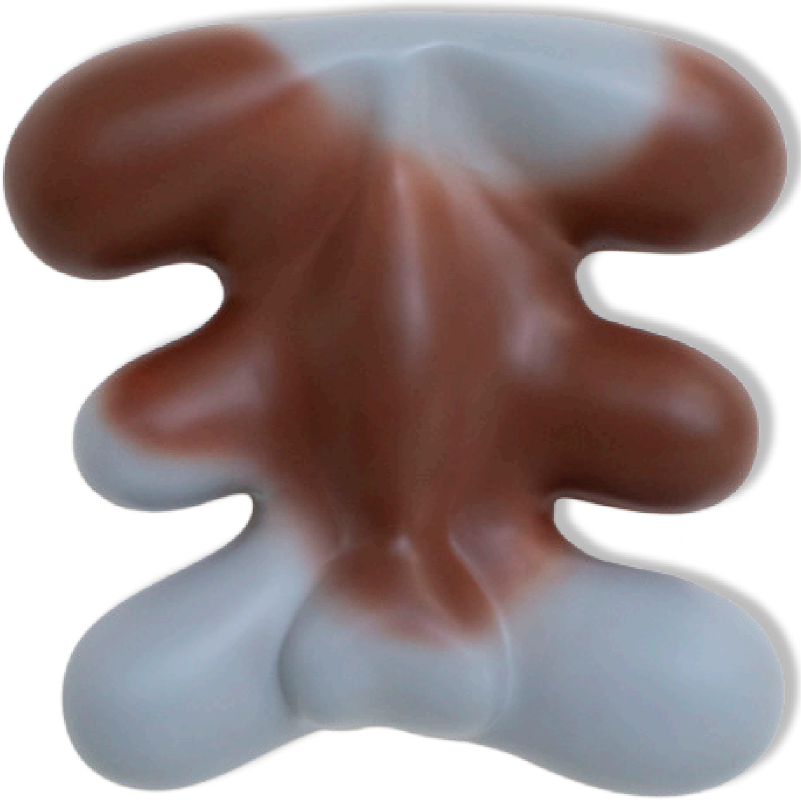
Working with artificial materials such as resin and styrene has made me increasingly aware of the contradictions between convenience and environmental impact, as well as the sense of constraint felt during the creative process. This awareness has led me to also incorporate natural materials, such as coconut fibre and paper, into my practice.

Living in Bali and engaging with people who were born and raised on this land has further shaped my perspective. Their ways of relating to nature – such as creating offerings entirely from natural materials like plants and food, and expressing gratitude toward the sun, the moon, and the natural world that surrounds human life – have offered me deep insight. These experiences quietly inform my work, prompting reflection on coexistence and the relationship between humans and their environment.

Your artworks often simulate human organs and physiological features. How do you understand the relationship and interconnection between humans and the ecological environment?

I use forms that evoke organs and skin, but I do not see the interior of the body as a closed space. Rather, I understand it as something that exists in constant relation to the external world, shaped continuously by its surroundings. Humans are not separate from nature or society; we are part of an ecosystem, living in a web of mutual influence. I feel that this understanding naturally finds its way into the forms and textures of my work.

Living in Bali has allowed me to encounter values that prioritise mutual support and a strong sense of community, even amid rapid modernisation. These experiences have led me to reflect on life, death, and human relationships in ways that differ from those in Japan. At the same time, whenever I return to Japan, I sense a discomfort with environments where consumption and systems are prioritised, and where sensitivity and intuition can become dulled. Moving between these different contexts has quietly but profoundly shaped my artistic practice.



Neonatal 1

2025 Polystyrene, paper, fibreglass and acrylic on wood 53 x 50 x 11 cm Artist: Kanoko Takaya

How do you perceive the balance between "vulnerability" and "resilience" in nature?

"Vulnerability" and "resilience" of nature deeply resonate with the human body and our senses. Nature is never fixed; it constantly changes, influenced by environmental factors such as temperature, humidity, wind, and light. In this process, fragility or weakness is not merely a flaw, but a form of sensitivity that allows one to perceive the environment and relationships with others.

At the same time, it is precisely this sensitivity that enables regeneration, adaptation, and the continual renewal of forms and rhythms, forming the resilience of nature. In my work, the soft, flexible forms and variable textures are not meant to emphasise fragility itself, but to express an "open space" that embraces change. Within this space, I hope viewers can sense the potential for regeneration, continuity, and the emergence of new strength.

You often use, acrylic, clay, and resin in your artworks. What draws you to these materials?

I have been exploring materials for many years. I layer artificial materials such as resin and fibreglass on top of forms shaped by hand in order to preserve my works as long and as securely as possible. At the same time, however, I am constantly aware of the odours and environmental impact associated with these materials, and I have been seeking ways to achieve the same strength and durability using natural materials. In Bali, I began experimenting with a mixture of coconut fibre, paper, and glue, creating my own unique material that preserves the tactile sensation and warmth of the original materials while maintaining the durability of the work. Recently, my practice has focused on embracing these dilemmas and contradictions, as well as the inherent qualities of the materials themselves, placing them at the centre of my expression.

How do you view the "tactility" of materials in your creative process? And how do you find the right material for each work?

In my creative process, tactility is at the core of my work. Over the past few years, I have become consciously aware of it, but looking back, I realise that my fascination with texture has been present since childhood, and I was shaping forms unconsciously from an early age. In my recent works, the "form" and "surface" have come to suggest tactile qualities visually, and the act of moving my hands often guides the work ahead of thought itself. I sometimes purchase materials new, while other times I use paper, fabric, or other items kindly passed on to me by friends. Tactility surrounds us in everyday life – it is felt through the ground we stand on, the clothes we wear, and everything we touch. It is so familiar that we rarely notice it consciously, yet it remains in our memory as experiences lived through the body. Tactile perception is said to develop earlier than the other senses, and I was fascinated to learn that it begins as early as the tenth week of pregnancy, when one can already sense the body and uterine walls. Babies explore everything through touch and by putting things in their mouths, because it provides more reliable information than seeing or hearing. From the moment we are born, we are inherently tactile beings.

What do you hope the audience to feel when appreciating these works?

To be honest, at this point I am still fully focused on exploring my own expression and materials, and I haven't yet reached a place where I can clearly define how I want viewers to feel. That said, if I were to answer, I would say that I hope people, in their daily lives, listen to their own hearts, honour their feelings and intuition, and live true to themselves by doing what they love. By doing so, I believe they can naturally share kindness with those around them. Before worrying about the environment or society, I feel it is most important to take care of oneself.

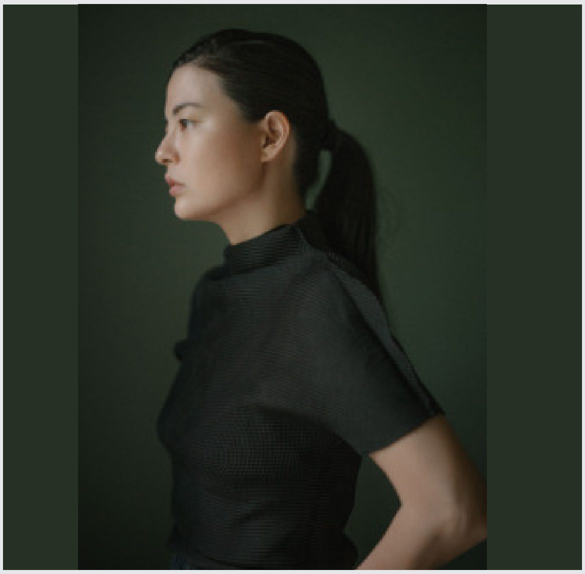
In addition, I create works that are not only displayed on walls but also interactive pieces that viewers can touch or sit on. By physically engaging with these works, I hope people can release tension and experience them in a relaxed state – shifting from simply "seeing" to truly "feeling" the work. It is a sensation where the body encounters the piece before thought or conscious reflection. I also believe that the way each viewer perceives and interprets the work may change depending on their psychological state and bodily memory.

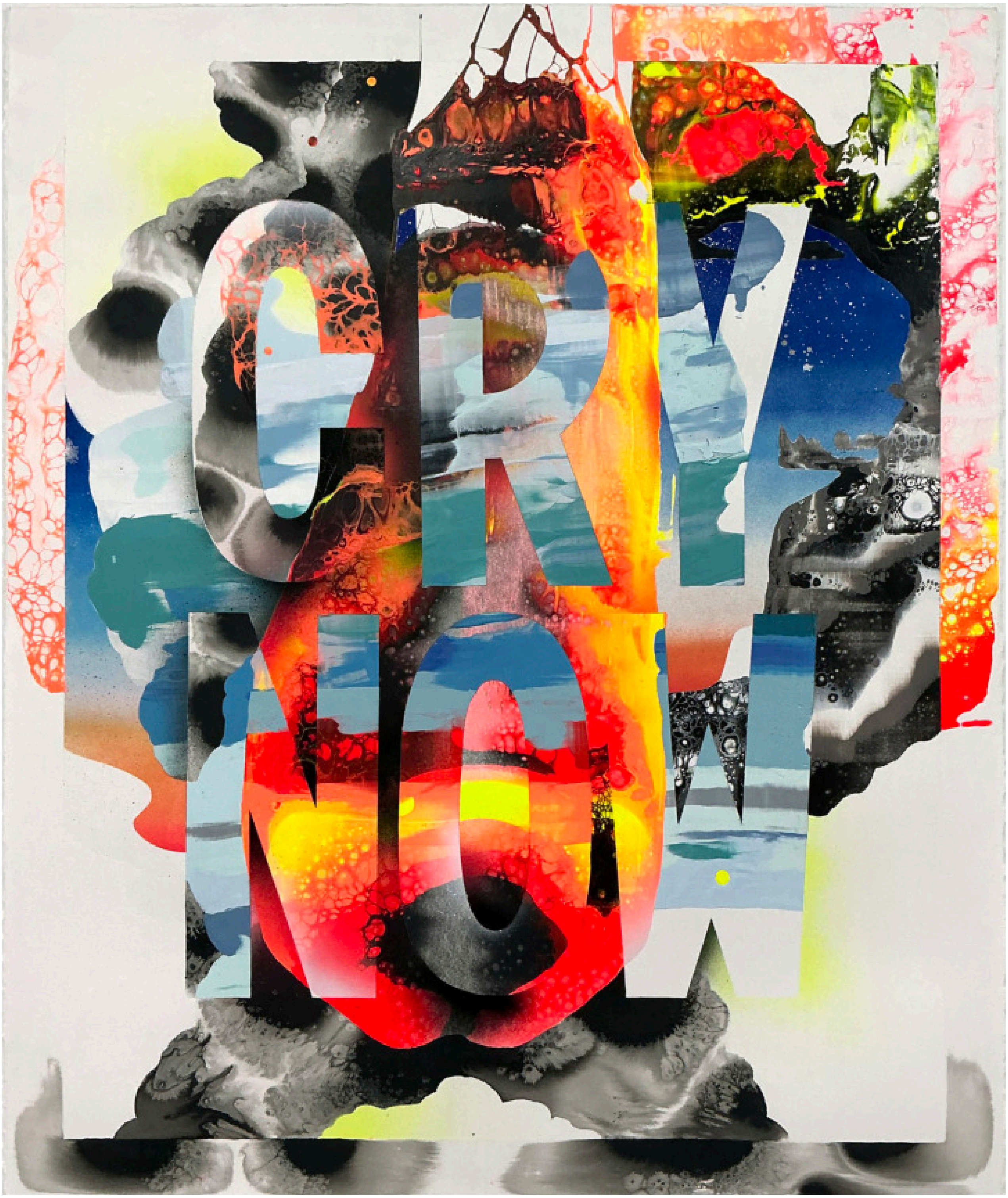
Which artists' ideas or artworks have influenced you the most, and how do their ideas continue to inspire your work?

The artist who has influenced me the most is [American modernist painter] Georgia O'Keeffe. In my own practice, I am often first drawn in by visual impressions, and later, as I learn more about an artist's ideas and concepts, I discover points that resonate deeply with my own sensibility.

O'Keeffe does not treat her motifs as symbols of something else, but rather as forms, colours, and relationships in themselves. This approach strongly resonates with me. While she depicts natural subjects such as mountains, trees, and flowers, there are moments when their forms and surfaces seem to resemble the human body or internal organs. Her work feels less about representation and more like a sensory, bodily experience.

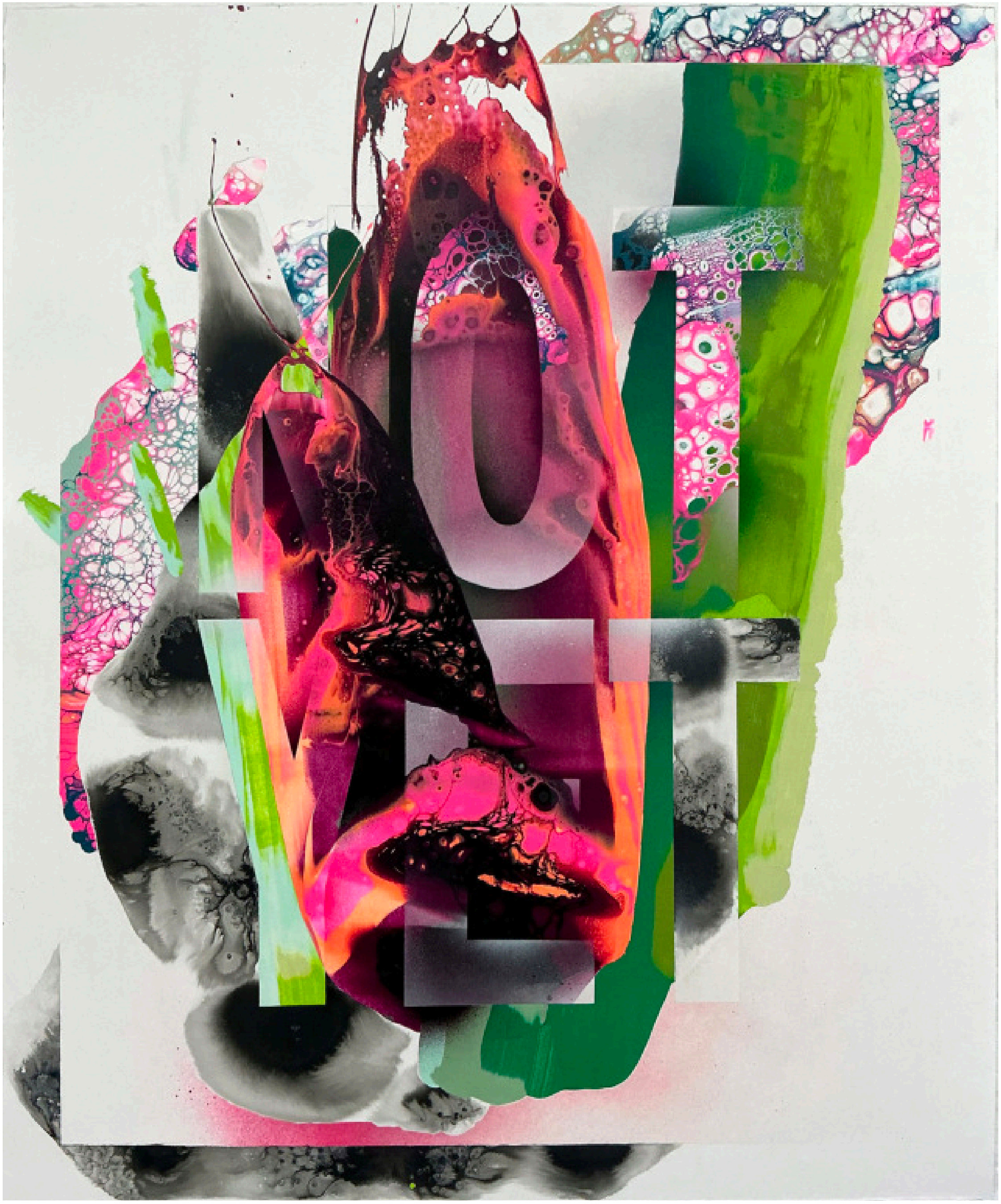
This sense of ambiguity between nature and the body, and her emphasis on feeling before interpretation, continue to quietly but profoundly influence my practice today.





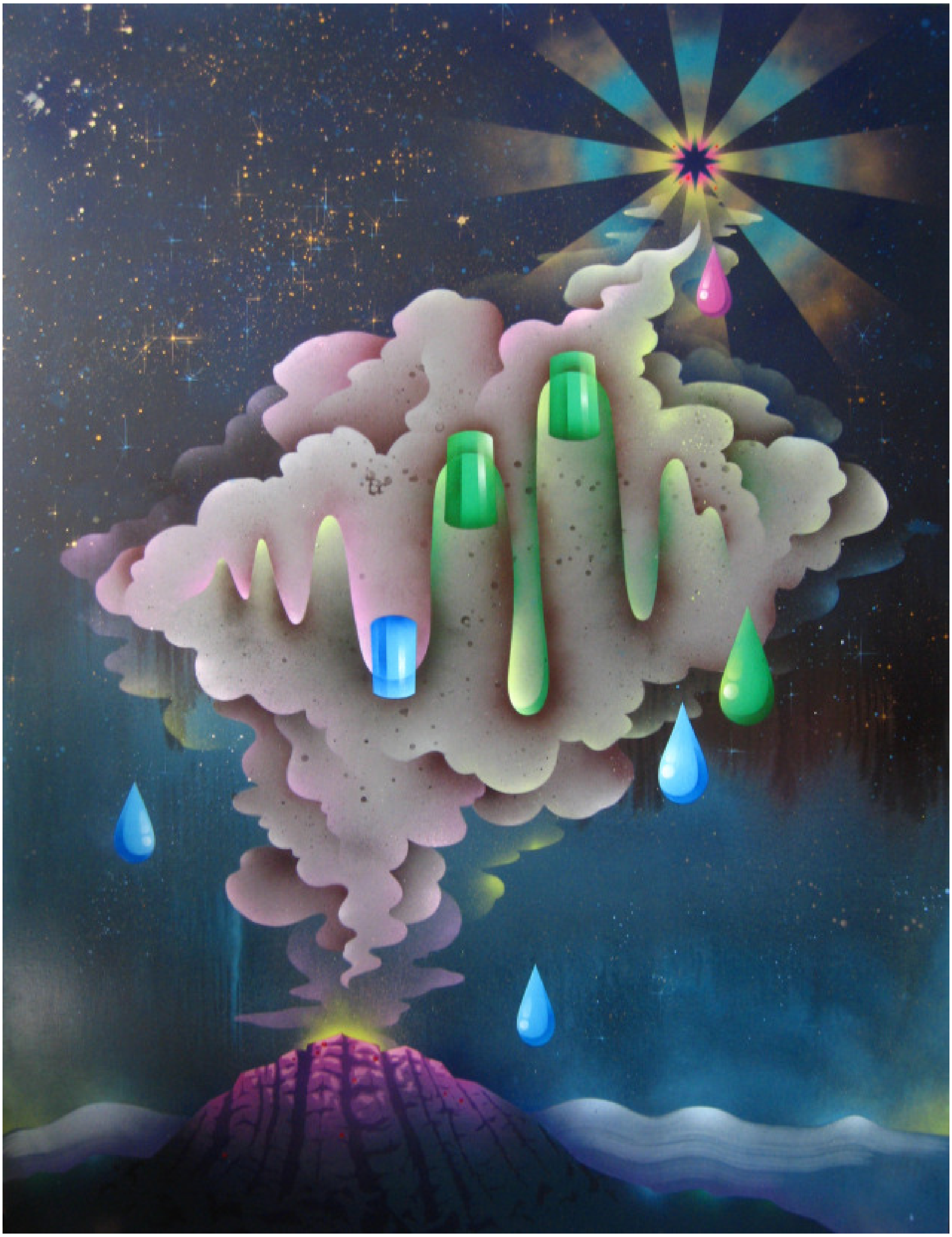
CRY NOW (J.B.B.D.B)

2025 **Acrylic paint and sumi ink on watercolour paper** **106.7 x 88.9 cm** Artist: Pearl C. Hsiung



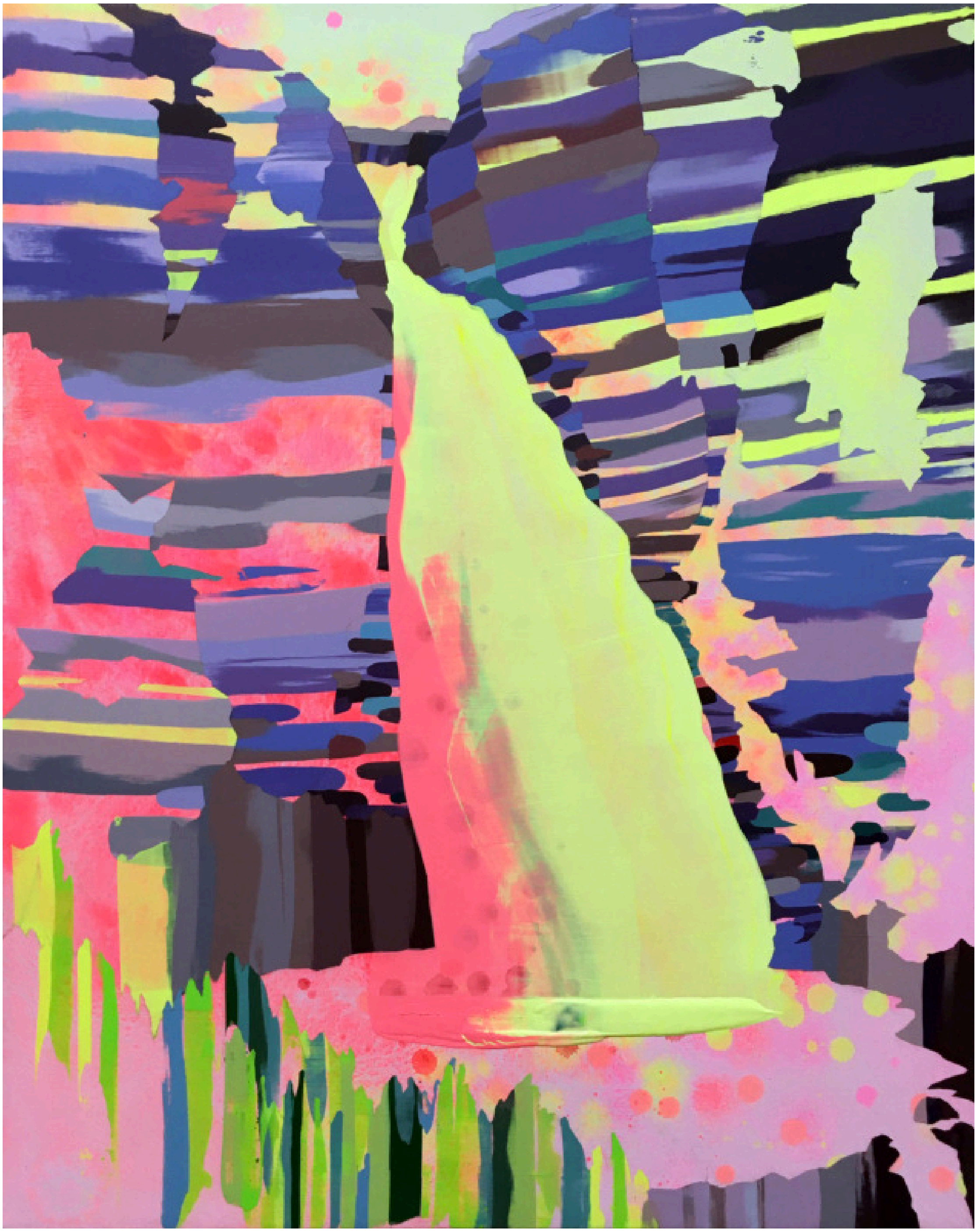
NOT YET (P.A.N.C.)

2025 **Acrylic paint and sumi ink on watercolour paper** **106.7 x 88.9 cm** Artist: Pearl C. Hsiung



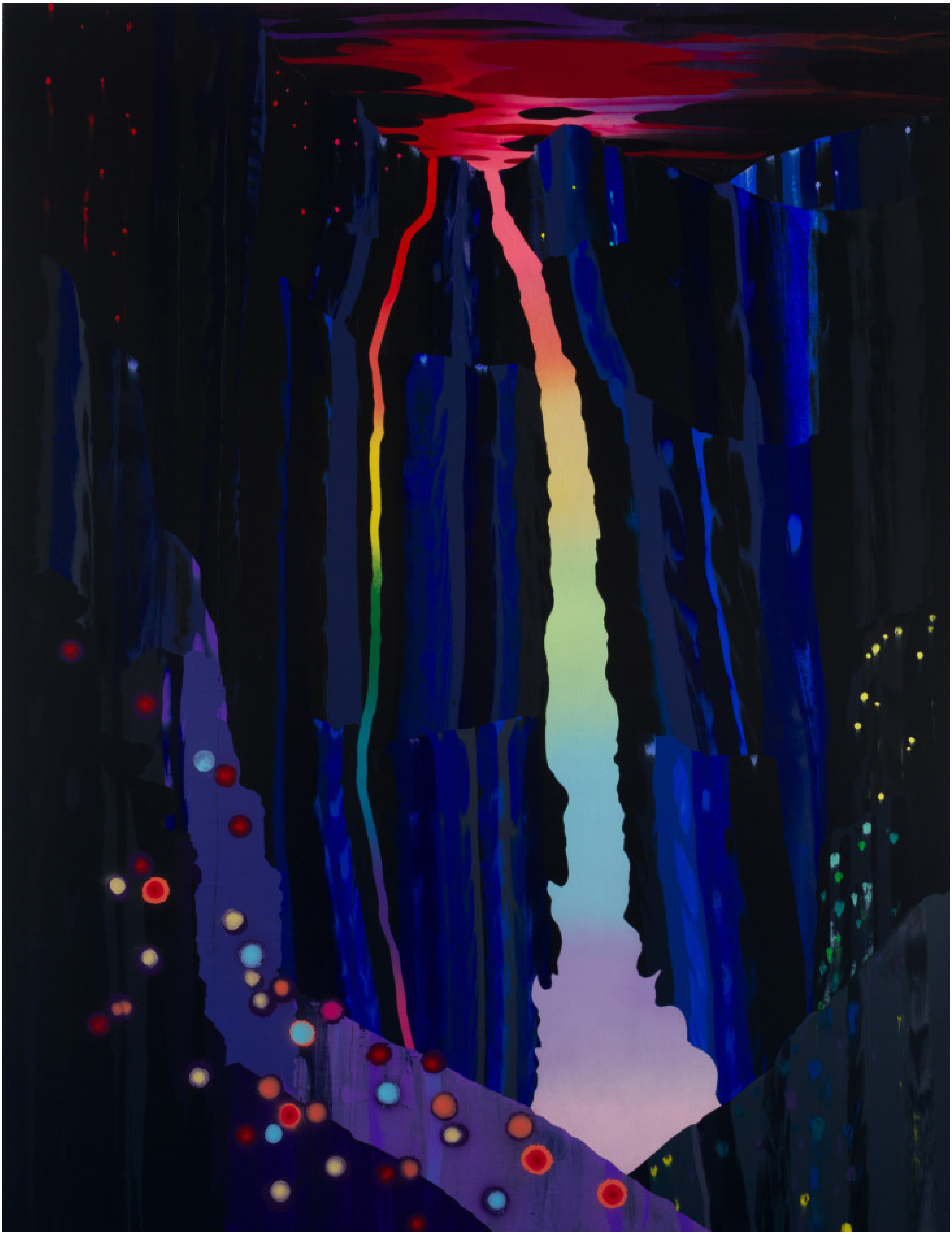
Shecretes

2008 **Oil-based enamel on canvas** **172.7 x 132 cm** Artist: Pearl C. Hsiung



They (Taranaki Falls)

2019 Acrylic on canvas **76.2 x 61 cm** Artist: Pearl C. Hsiung



Simurgh II

2017 Oil-based enamel and acrylic on canvas 198 x 152.4 cm Artist: Pearl C. Hsiung

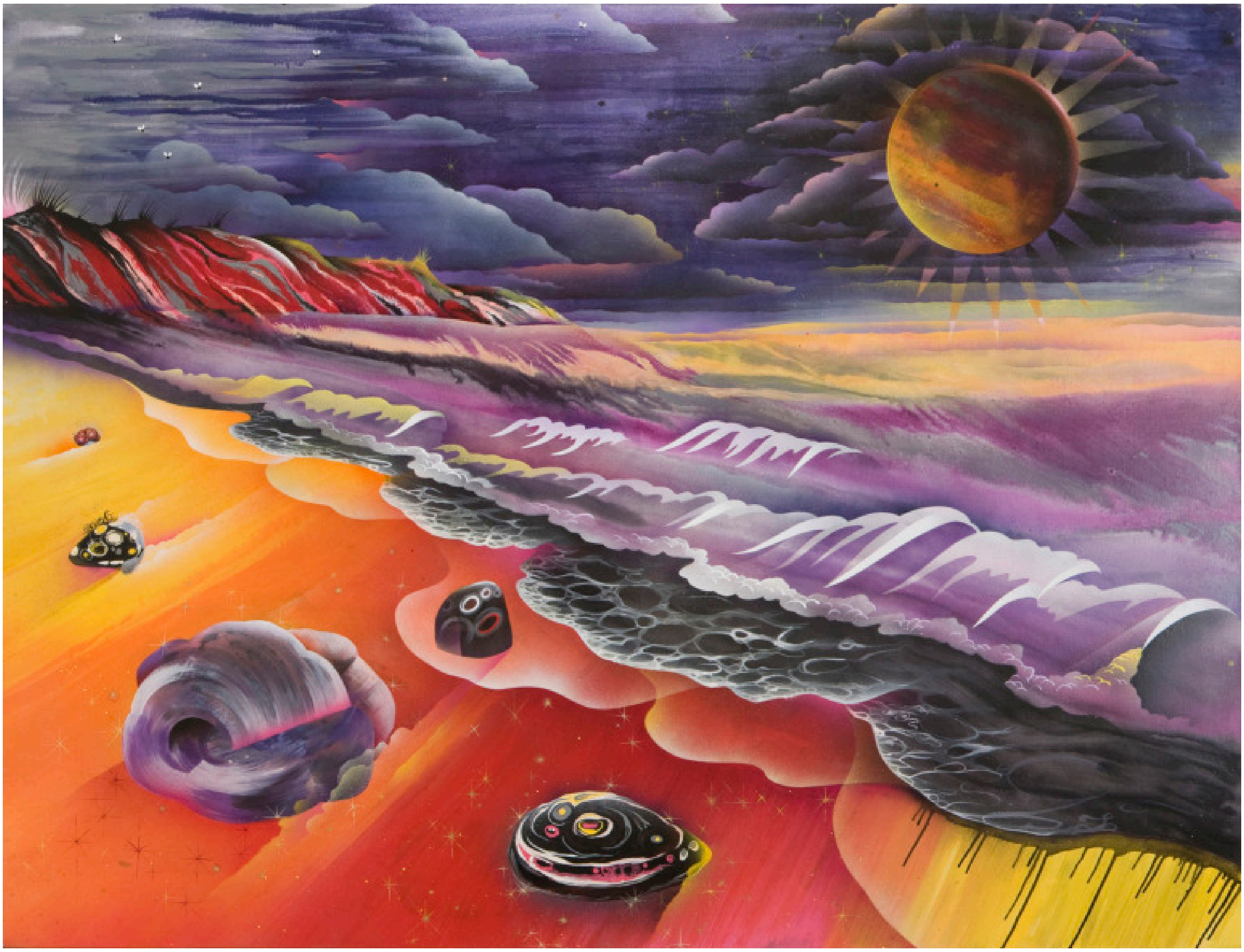
> ***"In 2021, I started to paint the phrase "Not Yet" as a response to political, social, and ecological crises. ... In recent years, the speed and "overwhelm" of crises elicited a follow-up text work. Earlier this year, I painted "Cry Now". While I still believe we need to be proactive and retain hope, it's also necessary to confront and mourn the countless losses and deaths of species, habitats, and lifeways – the human and more-than-human – immediately."***
>
> – Pearl C. Hsiung

PEARL C. HSIUNG 熊家珍

TAIWANESE-AMERICAN (B. 1973)

Pearl C. Hsiung is an American multimedia artist born in Taiwan and currently residing in Los Angeles, USA. Raised and educated in California, she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1997 and her Master of Fine Arts degree from Goldsmiths, University of London, in 2004. Initially working in commercial fashion design, Pearl soon realised it was not fulfilling and transitioned to artistic creation. Her works reflect her Taiwanese heritage and her upbringing in Los Angeles, employing bright colours, bold application techniques, and imagery influenced by the everyday and pop aesthetics of both cultures.

Hsiung's art is characterised by its boldness and innovation, using handcrafted imitations of computer graphics and mural-like vibrant colours to create a lively and fantastical artistic world. Humer is often employed in her works to critique cultural identity and challenge conventional notions of art creation.



Beach
2010 **Oil-based enamel on canvas** **117 x 152 cm** Artist: Pearl C. Hsiung

Q&A WITH PEARL C. HSIUNG

Your works often engage with natural landscapes and the boundaries between the synthetic and the organic. What resonance exists between the idea of "Cry Now" and the theme you have long pursued?

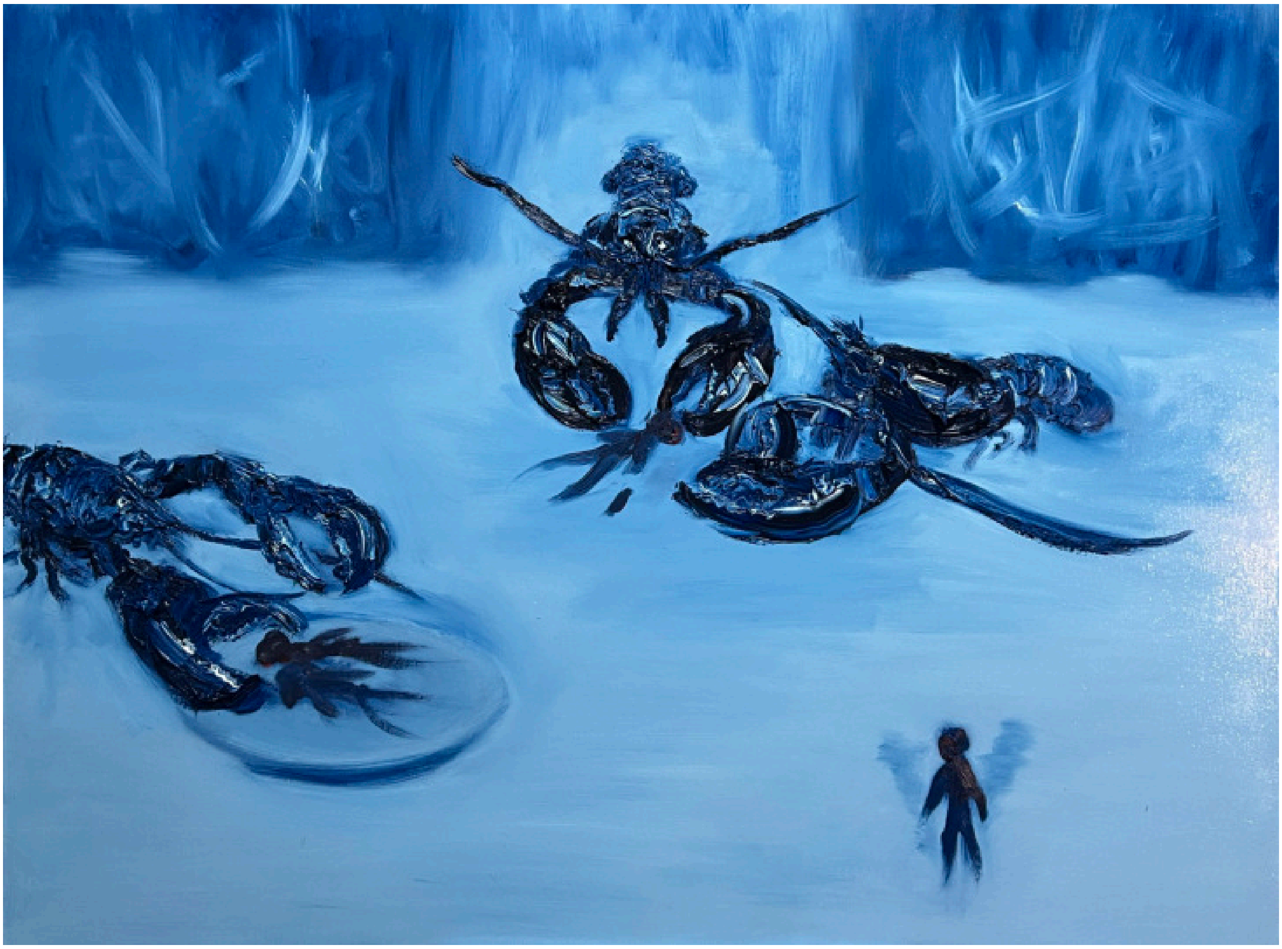
Personally, artistically, and philosophically, I have long been interested in geological phenomena that embody and/or express material transformation and simultaneity. Whether spending time within and observing sites in-person or researching places and events indirectly and from a distance, I'm engrossed in both the forms that these occurrences take – the temporary manifestation of elemental matter and forces in motion and between states – and how this speaks to me in visceral, energetic, and speculative ways. In shorthand, this can be thought of as meditation on human/nature interconnectivity, but I found that binary too generalised and vague to think with at times. Rather, explicitly thinking about a human/nature/artificial relationship seemed more accurate to the actual material entanglement we live amidst. It pulled in this other entity which our reality is populated by. Everything is *nature*, nothing is outside it, even the artificial, but since we live by these categories, they enable legibility and manageability of such large ideas. It was productive to think about the artificial/synthetic and how it populates our internal and external landscapes. Artificiality/synthetic-ness and the organic are active themes and modes in my practice.

In 2021, I started to paint the phrase "Not Yet" as a response to political, social, and ecological crises. It was a way to slow down the dominance of fear, dread, worry, despair in order to expand that zone of the "not yet" – a space big enough to rethink relationships, make connections, enact change, and decelerate catastrophe. In recent years, the speed and "overwhelm" of crises elicited a follow-up text work. Earlier this year, I painted "Cry Now". While I still believe we need to be proactive and retain hope, it's also necessary to confront and mourn the countless losses and deaths of species, habitats, and lifeways – the human and more-than-human – immediately. To actually feel the senseless, preventable species death, human genocide, and cultural (human and more-than-human) endings. To weep for them. To honour them.

Being a part of and making work about the inseparability and interdependence of human/nature, human/nature/artificial, and human/more-than-human ecologies, brought me to the phrase and idea of "Cry Now". There isn't a position outside of it all, outside of nature, so to be living and feeling in the present, we also make rain, a river, a waterfall. Internal and external landscapes echoing, rhyming and diffracting.

Your work features bold colours. What do you hope to express through these colourful element?

I use colour as a material force to enhance or complicate the viscerality, affect, tension or opticality of an artwork. Colour has weight, speed, and meaning. Colour is further activated in relationship to other colours. Weaving its emotive, metaphysical and symbolic capacity with the formal, cultural, and conceptual aspects of an artwork…



Human–Food Chain Series V
2025 Oil on canvas 60 x 80 cm Artist: Rick Shi

“When we eat food, we often feel satisfaction and pleasure. But if the roles are reversed – if the “food” starts consuming you – can you still feel relaxed and happy? My work uses role reversals between humans and food to create subtle emotional dissonance: The familiar sense of satisfaction transforms into unease, even a desire to cry.”

– Rick Shi

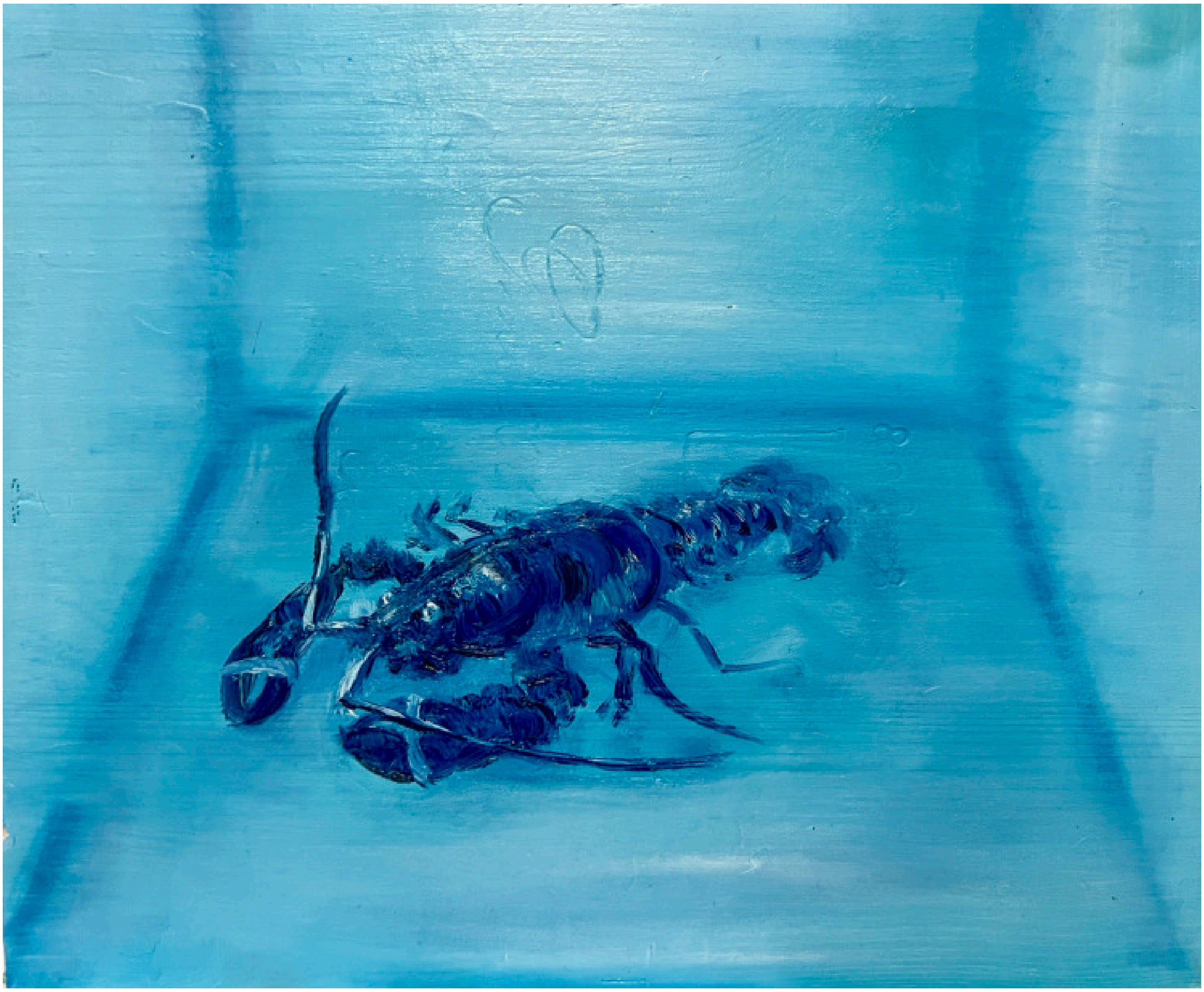
RICK SHI 石芮豪

CHINESE (B. 1993)

Rick Shi is an artist and curator whose practice spans painting, moving image, and visual narrative. Trained at the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, Sichuan Normal University, and the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, Shi incorporates traditional oil painting and contemporary conceptual approaches in his work.

Shi’s work examines the subtle links between people, objects, and social structures. Since 2022, he has focused on symbolic relational systems – such as the “food chain” and the “character chain” – and the power, ethics, and behaviours embedded within them. Through layered composition and narrative-driven colour, he turns these inquiries into visually striking and conceptually grounded paintings. His works have been exhibited in China and Europe and are held in several European collections.

Shi founded Artistic Clouds in 2019 and has served as Director of Prestige Gallery since 2022, where he oversees artist collaborations, exhibition programming, and curatorial development. His curatorial projects integrate art-historical insight with contemporary social observation, addressing public and timely cultural questions.



Human–Food Chain Series I

2025 Oil on canvas 27 x 32.5 cm Artist: Rick Shi

Q&A WITH RICK SHI

"Cry Now" focuses on the immediate emotions and actions triggered by ecological issues. How do you interpret this exhibition?

To me, "Cry Now" is not only an outlet for emotion but also a call to immediate action. I hope viewers can truly recognise the urgency of the ecological crisis and reflect on how they can participate in protecting the Earth. When we reduce indiscriminate hunting and consumption of animals, we are actually giving the world's ecosystems more space to recover. I hope this exhibition encourages people to express their own views, find a connection to ecological issues, and become part of the change.

In your daily life, which ecological or social issues inspire your creative work?

In daily life, phenomena like "feast culture" and overconsumption often touch me. Once, after dinner at a restaurant, I suddenly noticed the seafood in a glass case staring at me, as if trying to say something, which made me reflect. Consuming large amounts of seafood at banquets is taken for granted, yet people overlook the pressure on marine ecosystems. Wild seafood populations are declining year by year, and many marine creatures are forced to adapt – or even resist – the changing environment.

These contradictions and imbalances are important sources of inspiration for my work. The emotional tension and the stark contrast of colours in my pieces respond to this ecological crisis – I aim to remind viewers that our habitual "daily consumption" is quietly reshaping the fate of the oceans.

Which core ideas in your work resonate with "Cry Now"?

When we eat food, we often feel satisfaction and pleasure. But if the roles are reversed – if the "food" starts consuming you – can you still feel relaxed and happy? My work uses role reversals between humans and food to create subtle emotional dissonance: The familiar sense of satisfaction transforms into unease, even a desire to cry. This emotional inversion strongly resonates with the theme of "Cry Now", allowing viewers to feel a quiet, ineffable connection with the work.

Are bright colours a distinctive feature of your work? What do you aim to express through vibrant elements?

I often use strong, striking colours to keep viewers alert. In this series, blue and red are the main colours: Red symbolises the end of life and the "cooked" state of food, while blue represents the origin of life and the depth of the ocean. The contrast is very sharp, making red stand out against the blue, like an emotional signal leaping from the deep sea – dangerous, yet impossible to ignore.

What do you hope viewers take away from your work regarding nature and life?

In my work, humans and animals form a constantly reversing "drama". When viewers enter the scene, it's like stepping into a flowing narrative: Humans eat animals, and animals, in turn, consume humans. Roles continuously switch, identities blur, prompting viewers to ask themselves: Am I more like the human or the consumed animal? This complex emotion is at the heart of the work. When familiar life relationships are inverted, habitual consumption and hunting become experiences of observation, even fear. If the work can trigger thought, questioning, or a re-examination of human–nature relations, this emotional impact is the work's most compelling power.

Which artists or ideas have influenced you most, and how have they inspired your work?

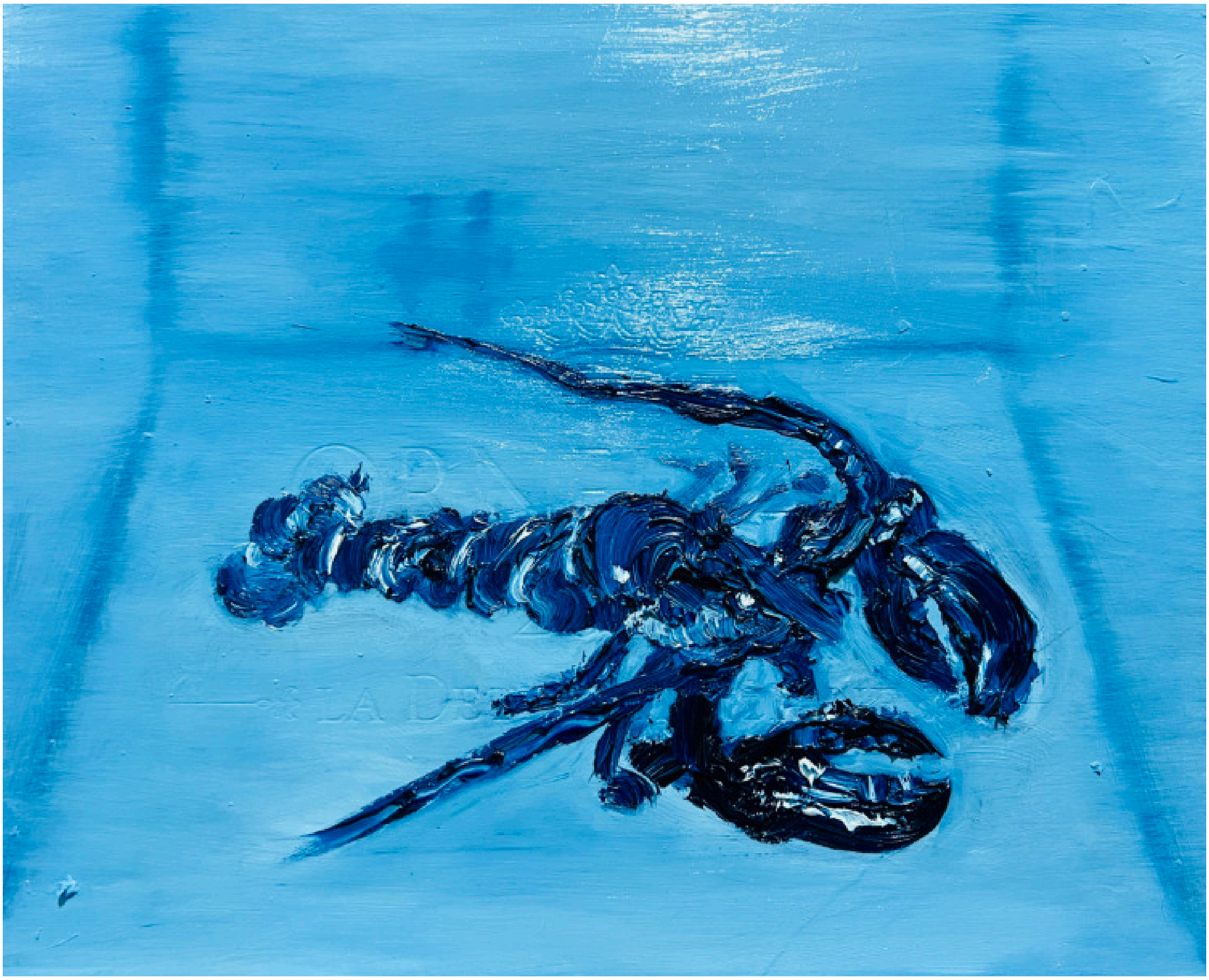
The artists who have influenced me most include [British painter] Lucian Freud, [Singaporean artist] Tang Da Wu, and [Belgian painter and filmmaker] Michaël Borremans. Their work has opened key directions in both thought and narrative.

Lucian Freud presents the "truth of the flesh" with uncompromising intensity. His bodies are both fragile and strong, carrying an inescapable life tension. This direct approach to the essence of life inspires me to address life and death honestly and sharply in my work.

Tang Da Wu's work is public and critical, responding directly to social and ecological issues. He emphasises that art is not just aesthetic but also action and responsibility. From him, I learned that art can intervene in reality and provoke thought. Consequently, my work consistently engages with ecological crises and consumption culture, carrying a sense of urgency that demands response.

Michaël Borremans creates carefully designed narratives with psychological depth, situating viewers in a space between reality and the surreal. His approach inspired me to treat my work as "theatrical scenes" – where identities of humans and animals constantly reverse, generating psychological dislocation and emotional tension for viewers.

Combining these influences, I try to intertwine the reality of the flesh (Freud), social responsibility (Tang), and narrative tension with psychological dislocation (Borremans), making my work not just an object to view but a mirror for reflecting on human–nature relationships.



Human–Food Chain Series II

2025 Oil on canvas 27 x 32.5 cm Artist: Rick Shi

In recent years, the world has experienced dramatic changes in health, ecology, and society. How do you view the role of an artist's sensitivity today? How do you turn the external ecological environment into personal reflection or creative motivation?

The global upheavals of recent years – from health crises to ecological imbalance to social turbulence – remind me that an artist's sensitivity is more important than ever. Sensitivity is not just observing events but capturing the "feel of the times": noticing subtle changes amid chaos, anxiety, and fractures, and translating them into visual language.

For me, the external ecological environment is not abstract; it is a real force affecting all of us. When I see declining marine resources, increasing overconsumption, and accelerating species loss, I am not merely understanding these phenomena – I am pierced by them, pushed by them. That piercing sensation becomes creative motivation.

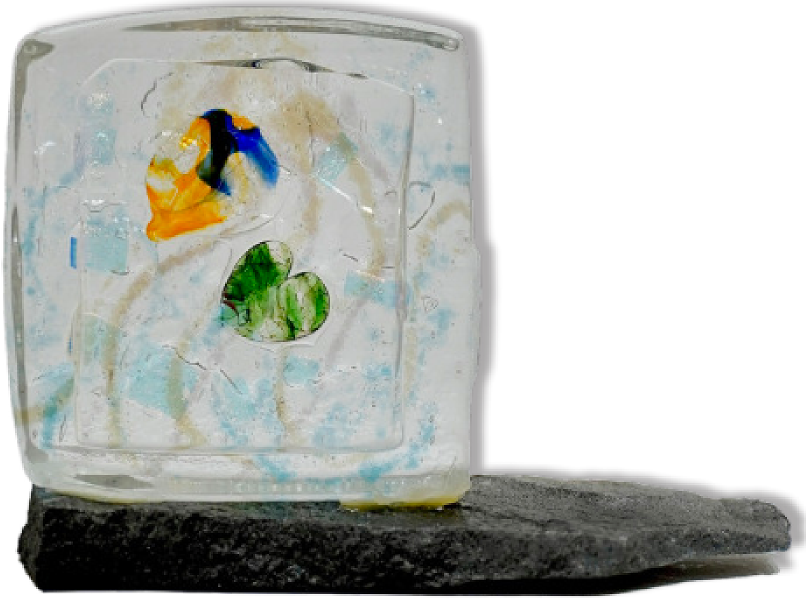
I transform ecological tension into inner reflection – about humanity's place, about our habitual violence, about the fate of the weak in the food chain. These reflections are expressed in the work: through role reversal, colour warnings, and emotional dissonance, allowing viewers to enter the same sense of unease and urgency that I feel.

Today, an artist's sensitivity is not only about perceiving reality but also a responsibility – to make hidden crises visible again, to awaken emotions numbed by routine. If art can make people "feel the pain" again, it can prompt them to "consider change".

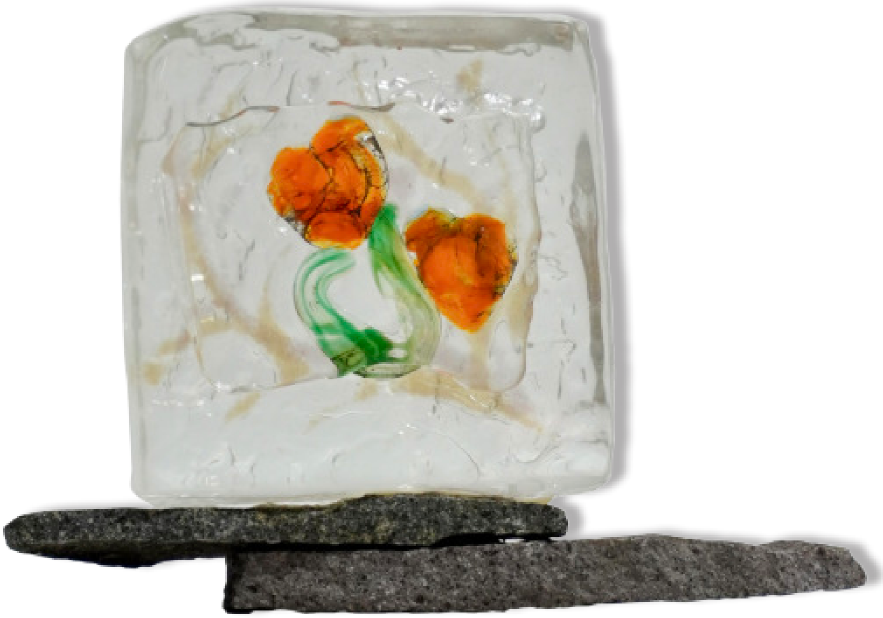
How do you see the future of "species protection" and "ecological art"? What directions do you hope to explore next?

I believe "species protection" and "ecological art" will become increasingly important. As ecological crises intensify, these themes are no longer just academic discussions or artistic slogans – they are realities society must confront. Future ecological art will go beyond visual expression, emphasising action, interdisciplinary collaboration, and real intervention in ecosystems. Artists will need to work with scientists, environmental organisations, and communities to consider how art can drive change.

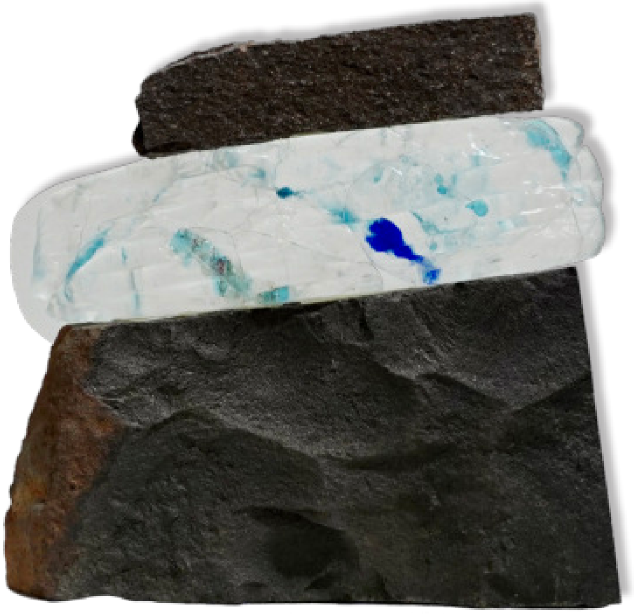
For my part, I will continue to focus on ecological environments and species survival, expanding my ongoing "Human & Food Chain" series. This series not only examines predatory relationships between humans and animals but also explores the deeper ethical and emotional tensions underlying the food chain. In the future, I hope to deepen the following directions: (i) sharper role reversals: further confronting viewers with the dual identity of "prey" and "predator"; (ii) exploring ecological ethics: reflecting on how consumption culture alters the fate of oceans, forests, and species; (iii) constructing a more complete narrative: forming a coherent "human–animal–food" dramatic universe to show humanity's place amid ecological crisis; and (iv) encouraging viewer action: prompting not only emotional response but also reflection and change in personal behaviour. For me, this is not just an artistic direction but a way to maintain an ongoing dialogue with the world.



Heart to Heart
2023 Cast glass, stone 13.5 x 19.5 x 5.5 cm Artist: Tan Sock Fong

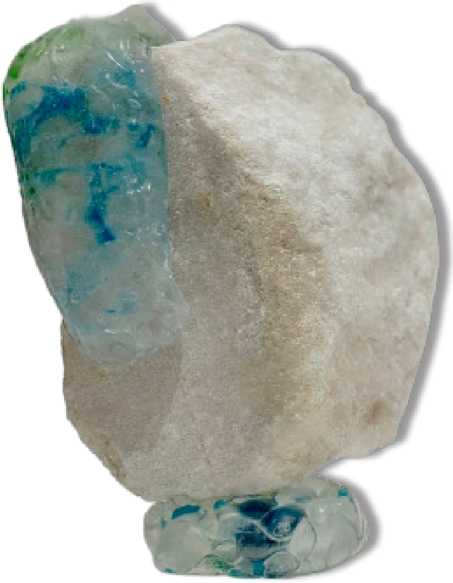


Elated
2023 Cast glass, stone 14 x 20 x 6 cm Artist: Tan Sock Fong



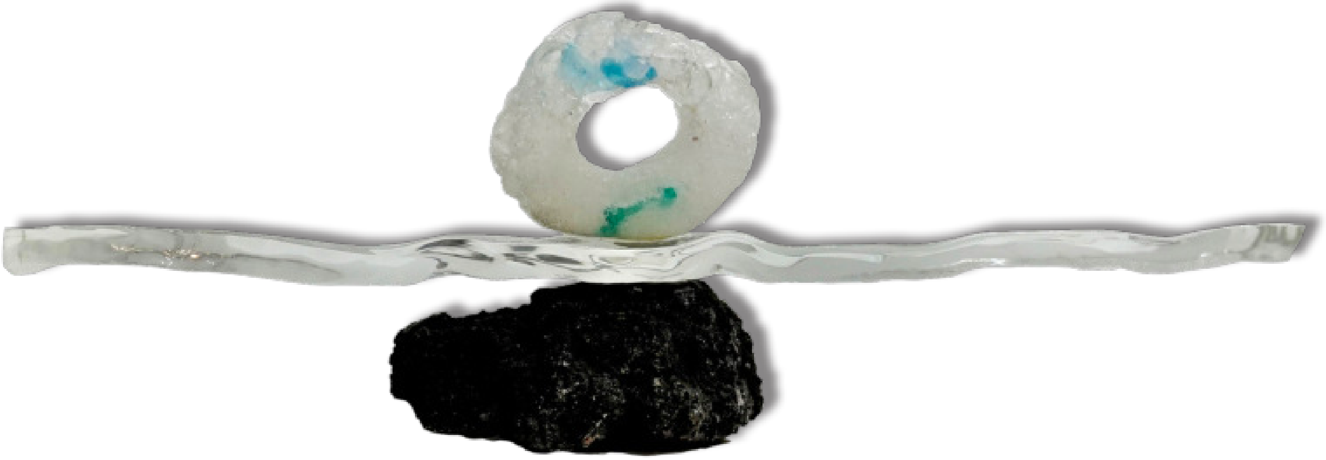
Ireland I

2023 Cast glass, stone 23 x 23 x 4 cm Artist: Tan Sock Fong



Ascend

2023 Cast glass, stone 15.5 x 13 x 9 cm Artist: Tan Sock Fong



Aequilibrium

2023 **Cast glass, fused glass, stone** **11 x 32 x 9.5 cm** Artist: Tan Sock Fong

> ***"Most of my artworks are reactions to my observations of my daily environment, which I see from a unique perspective. I'm particularly drawn to issues like climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss, and I strive to present a message of hope and resilience in the face of these challenges. I believe that art can inspire positive change, and I aim to highlight the beauty and strength of nature, even in the midst of adversity."***
>
> – Tan Sock Fong

TAN SOCK FONG 陈淑芳

SINGAPOREAN (B. 1966)

Tan Sock Fong is a glass artist and printmaker from Singapore. A recipient of the Mobil Art Scholarship in 1988, she received her Bachelor's Degree in Art and Design (Hon) from the University of Wolverhampton (England), majoring in Glass in 1993, on a National Arts Council overseas study bursary.

Beginning in the 1980s as a young artist, Sock Fong has also been a dedicated teacher and active supporter of the art scene in Singapore. She shares her extensive experience and skills through her artwork and also through innovative art programmes at her studio at Emily Hill and at various local institutions. Sock Fong has taught at Lasalle College of the Arts, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore Polytechnic, and Nan Chiau High School.

Q&A WITH TAN SOCK FONG

In your daily life, are there any specific ecological issues or social phenomena that spark your creative inspiration?

Most of my artworks are reactions to my observations of my daily environment, which I see from a unique perspective. I'm particularly drawn to issues like climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss, and I strive to present a message of hope and resilience in the face of these challenges. I believe that art can inspire positive change, and I aim to highlight the beauty and strength of nature, even in the midst of adversity.

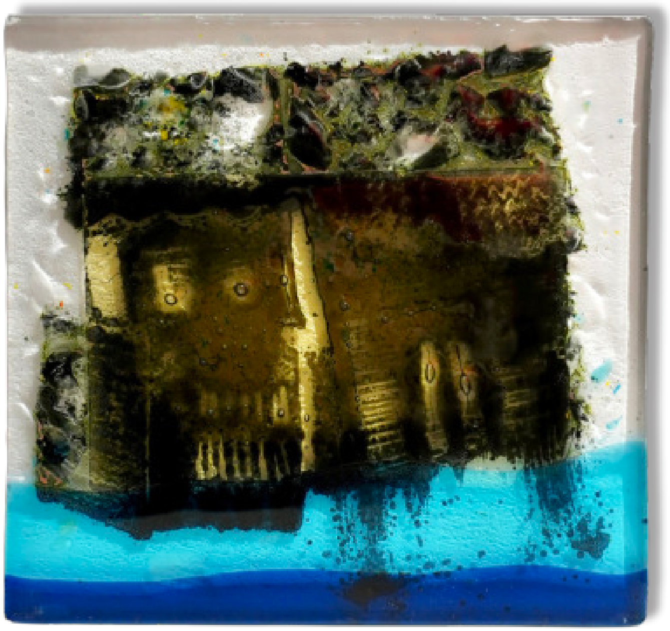
Why do you prefer glass as a medium for your creations?

I prefer glass as a medium for its tranquillity and transparency, allowing us to peer into its depth, much like exploring the ocean's abyss, where light filters down, revealing hidden worlds. The process of working with glass is meditative, requiring focus and patience, much like the slow, deliberate pace of oceanic exploration. The way glass reflects light resonates with the interconnectedness of all living beings, and I wish to reveal the resilience and beauty of life, even in its most fragile form.

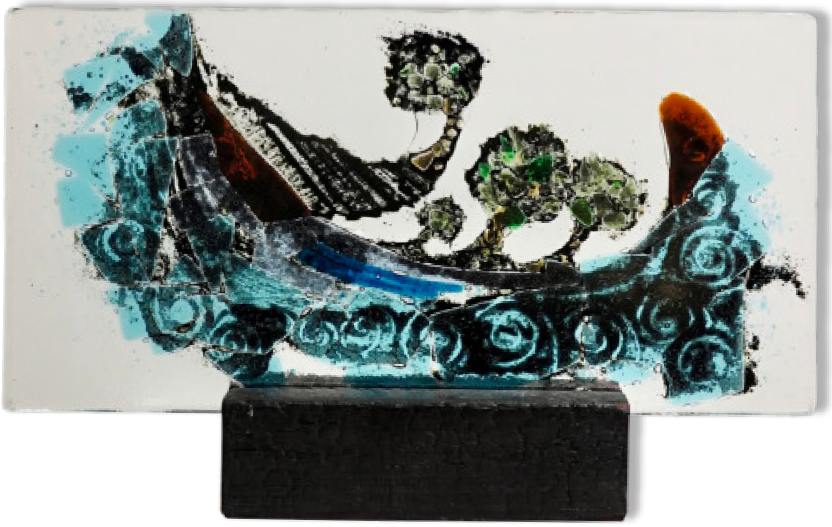
In your artworks, we can see layers upon layers of colour, patterns and lines. What visual effects or emotions do you aim to convey through these elements?

The layers of colour, patterns, and lines in my artworks suggest the intricate tapestry of life, hinting at a delicate balance between chaos and harmony. These visual elements seem to shimmer and shift, mirroring the dynamic interplay between humanity and the natural world. My intention is to create an emotional resonance, inviting viewers to immerse themselves in the complexities of nature and introspect about their place within the larger ecosystem.

I enjoy experimenting with various materials and techniques, allowing me to discover new ways of shaping, texturing, casting, and fusing. It's not always easy, but overcoming challenges is what makes the journey so rewarding. Every small victory gives me the strength to push forward, and that's what drives me to keep creating and exploring. It's a journey of continuous learning and growth, and I'm loving every step of it!



A Joyful Journey
2013 Fused glass with ink–powder drawing 23.5 x 24.5 x 0.7 cm Artist: Tan Sock Fong



Outing at Sea I
2013 Fused glass with ink–powder drawing Artist: Tan Sock Fong

In your installation, you invited 100 environmental advocates to collaborate with you. What does this "participatory art" mean to you?

In my installation, I invited 100 participants to join me in amplifying the message: "Look at our ocean! See beyond the surface." I hope to create a collective voice that inspires change and improvement. The installation emphasises that art can unite people from all walks of life, and that shared knowledge and skills can help us overcome challenges.

What reflections or emotions do you hope your artworks evoke in the audience?

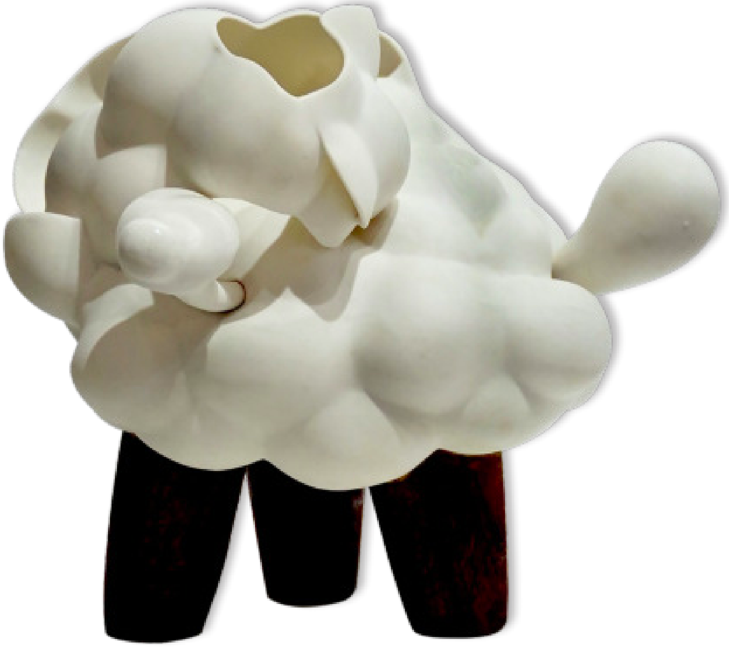
I hope my art encourages viewers to pause, reflect, and re-examine their relationship with the environment. My aspiration is that they feel inspired to reconnect with nature, fostering a sense of responsibility and empathy, and ultimately, make conscious choices to nurture a more harmonious coexistence with the natural world.

Which artists' ideas or artworks have influenced you the most, and how do their ideas continue to inspire your work?

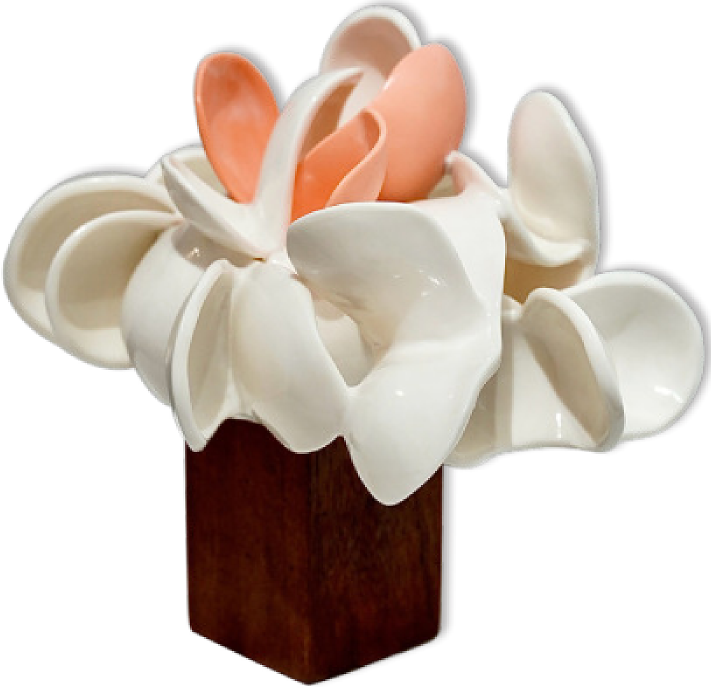
I'm deeply influenced by the works and philosophies of senior artists like [Singaporean sculptor and artist] Han Sai Por and [Singaporean multidisciplinary artist] Chng Seok Tin. Their profound observations of nature, environment, and human culture are truly inspiring. I admire their dedication to their craft, perseverance, and commitment to lifelong learning and sharing. They embody the values of humility, respect, and honesty, demonstrating what it means to be a true artist.

I'm also very grateful for the impact of [my teacher] Islandar Jarli's philosophy on craftsmanship and material handling, which has taught me to approach my work with respect and attention to detail.

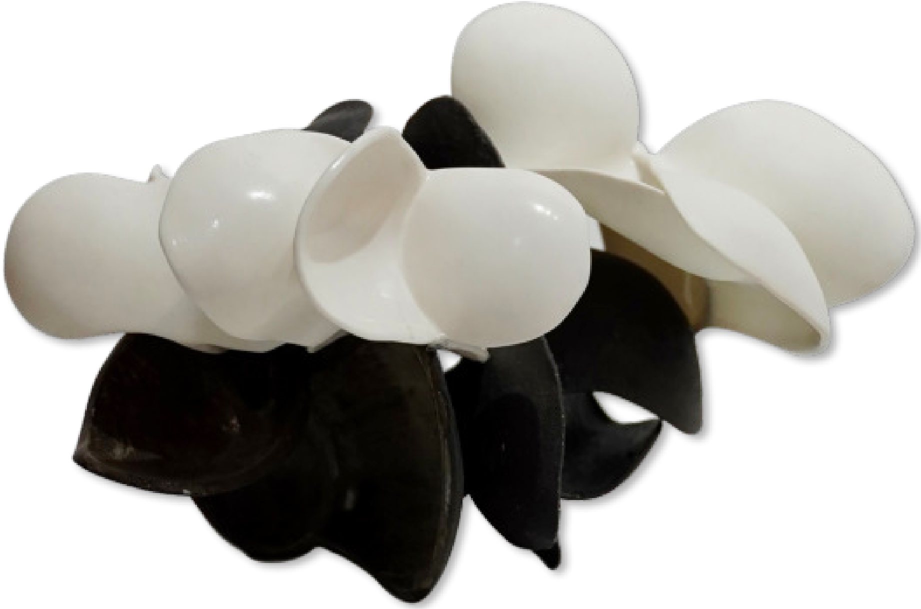
These artists are role models, showing us that art is not just about creating, but about living with integrity, respect, and compassion for the world around us.



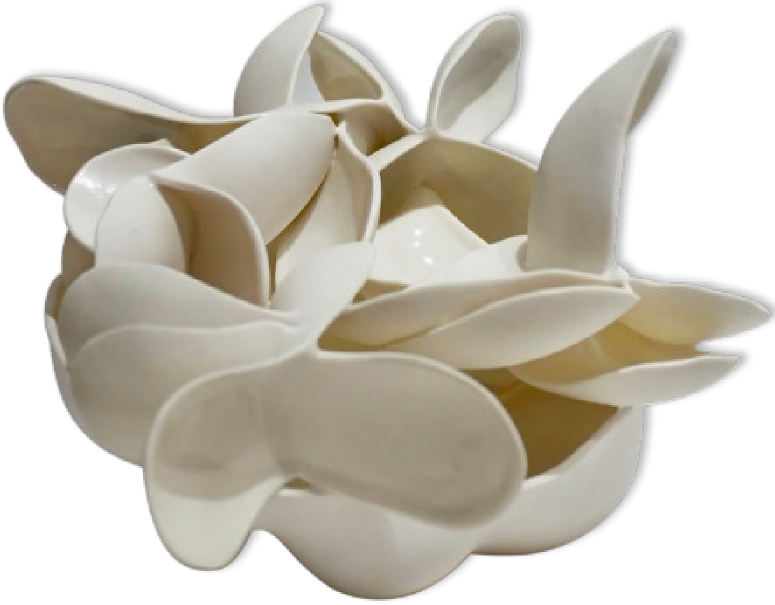
Blooming Daydreams Series – Bubbly
2018 **Southern Ice porcelain** **22 x 20 x 28 cm** Artist: Teo Huey Ling



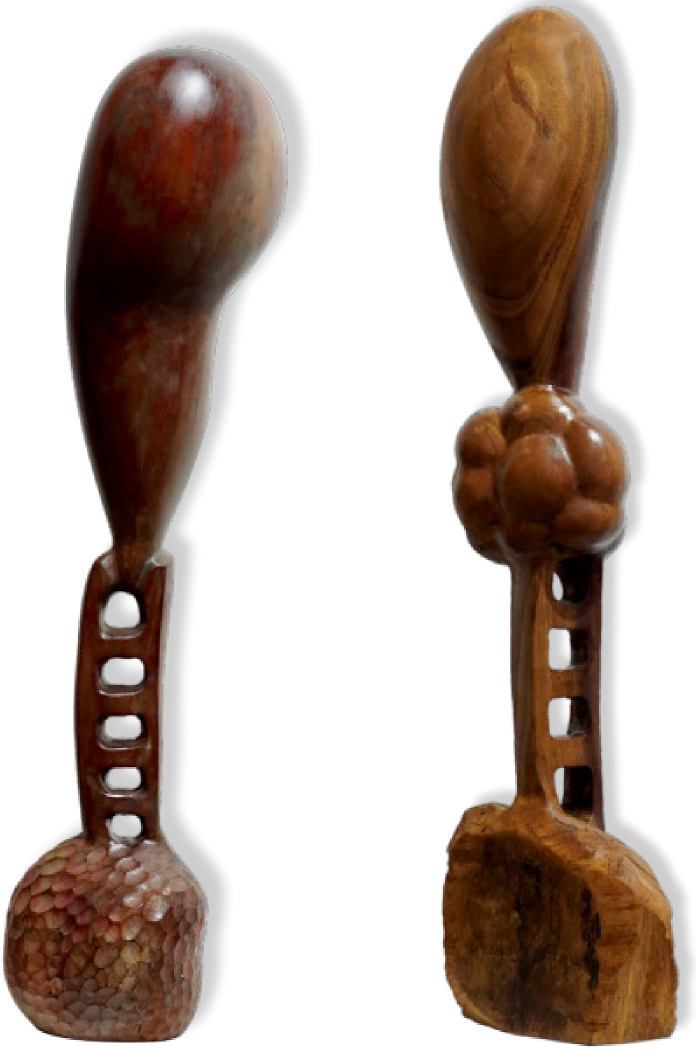
In-Between Curves Series
2024 **Parian porcelain** Artist: Teo Huey Ling



In-Between Curves Series – Black and White Curves
2024 **Parian porcelain** Artist: Teo Huey Ling



In-Between Curves I
2024 **Southern Ice porcelain** Artist: Teo Huey Ling



Amorphous Wood Series – Climb to the Clouds I & II
2018 **Khaya wood** Artist: Teo Huey Ling

> ***“My current creative process is born from a state of conscious retreat. The studio is my sanctuary from the relentless digital news cycle and its dreadful reports of global conflict. Here, I find myself preoccupied with a fundamental question: Why do we, as humans, choose to harm one another and destroy the very land that sustains us, for the sake of ego, power, and greed?”***
>
> – Teo Huey Ling

TEO HUEY LING 张慧玲

SINGAPOREAN (B. 1974)

Teo Huey Ling's artworks strive to achieve an ambiguous form, shifting biomorphic curves through repetition, overlapping, and juxtaposition. Her body of work includes several series, such as the "Knitted Series", "A Little Daydream", "Amorphous", "Convenes in Curves", and most recently, "In-Between Curves". Each series has expanded versions made in different materials, including porcelain, merino wool, and wood.

In her latest series, "In-Between Curves", Teo's ceramic artworks delve into the subtle spaces between forms, inviting viewers to discover the negative space that emerges from the interplay of flowing, biomorphic curves. The series explores what exists "in-between" – whether it is the space between opaque and translucent materials, or the harmony and contrast found among interdependent curves. Beauty is created through clarity and ambiguity of these elements between these concave and convex surfaces.

Teo's works offer both structure and calmness, arising from the ideal of "in-between-ness", just as life often requires us to navigate not only the black or white, but the grey spaces in-between, where possibilities, compromises, and subtle nuances lie. The fluidity of these forms speaks to the ever-shifting nature of our experiences, where answers are not always clear, and meaning is often found in those grey areas.

Teo develops her personal visual language through mastering various technical skills, including hand-building, press-moulding, and slip-casting porcelain. Yet the overarching form remains organic, involving a complex visual interplay of curves, often resembling floral petals from every angle, inviting viewers' imagination and interpretation.

Q&A WITH TEO HUEY LING

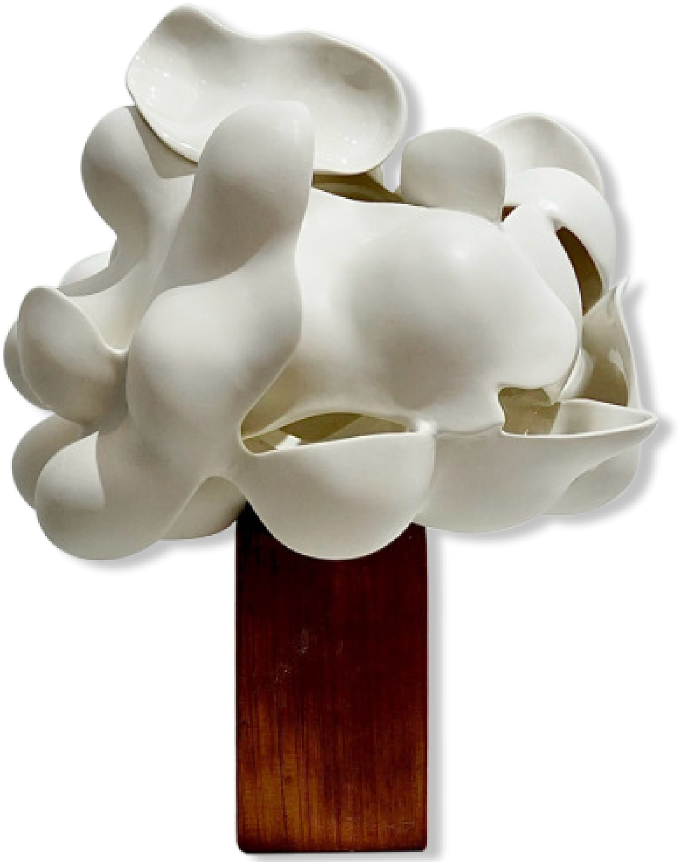
"Cry Now" directs the audience's attention towards the current emotions and actions related to ecological protection. How do you understand the exhibition?

To me, "Cry Now" reflects a collective reaction to our present environmental condition. To "cry now" is to feel the inevitable burdens that modern civilisation has dealt to Mother Earth. My artistic response to this is through a quiet conversation with my materials.

I don't create work about nature in a literal sense. My relationship with it is somewhat alienated; I live in a city of flats and manicured parks. But in my studio, I work with clay dug from the ground and wood that has fallen from the land. I think clay has remained a popular medium because of its tangible link to the Earth, just as wood carries the memory of the tree raised from the soil. They are gifts from nature. Whether I use local clay, packaged clay, wood, or wool, they are my most direct connection to the natural world.

For me, ecology in art is not a theme, but a partnership practised with my materials. I spend my time learning what they can do, listening to them, and helping their inherent beauty come through.

So, while my "In-Between Curves" series isn't about ecological loss, it is the result of a slow, attentive way of partnership to this material world. In doing so, it is my way of bridging that alienation from nature, practising humility, and creating a quiet beauty. The artworks become a reminder – to myself and the viewer – of how we are all ultimately connected to this world.



Amorphous Series
2019 **Southern Ice porcelain** Artist: Teo Huey Ling

In your daily life, are there any specific ecological issues or social phenomena that spark your creative inspiration?

My current creative process is born from a state of conscious retreat. The studio is my sanctuary from the relentless digital news cycle and its dreadful reports of global conflict. Here, I find myself preoccupied with a fundamental question: Why do we, as humans, choose to harm one another and destroy the very land that sustains us, for the sake of ego, power, and greed?

Yet, this disillusionment does not define my work. I still firmly believe humanity is precious, capable of creating wonders even amidst ruin. Instead, my art fuels a search for a more nuanced understanding. My "In-Between Curves" series, with its porcelain petals and interdependent shapes, is a meditation on the space between absolutes. The world is not simply black and white; truth is often found in the subtle, complicated grey areas.

While the forms evoke a quiet beauty, they represent a fragile, interconnected system. In this globalised age, no artist is an island; the pervasive crises of our time seep into the studio. My response is to seek reclusion in the act of creation itself, making forms that speak of complexity, interdependence, and a quiet resilience.

There are many abstract shapes and forms in your artworks. What draws you to this kind of "ambiguity" in creative expression?

The idea of ambiguity is central to my practice. I am drawn to the creative potential of something being this and also potentially that – where nothing is fixed and everything is in a state of flux, like a river that is constantly flowing.

I want to celebrate this varied, amorphous diversity. From this, the concept of "in-between-ness" naturally emerges, where meaning is not black and white, but exists in the subtle, grey areas in between.

Each of my "In-Between Curves" series begins with a simple curve, pressed or cast from a plaster mould. I invite the audience to see a concave and a convex shape, exploring how these two sides of the same curve combine to create a complex, cohesive form.

The finished work offers a structured form with a natural visual flow. It can be interpreted from different directions, engaging each viewer in a personal experience of looking and discovering the beauty of ambiguity.

You've worked with wood and ceramics. How do the characteristics of different materials influence the way you use them?

All materials have unique temperaments and demand different approaches. Clay uses an additive method – a process of building positive space to construct form from nothing. Wood, on the other hand, is a subtractive method, involving the carving away of negative space to reveal the form hidden within, guided by the wood's own grain and structure.

Lots of time and effort were used to learn to work with these materials, especially coping with structural failure in firing clay, and learning to see a form in a chunk of wood before chopping the negative away with a chainsaw.

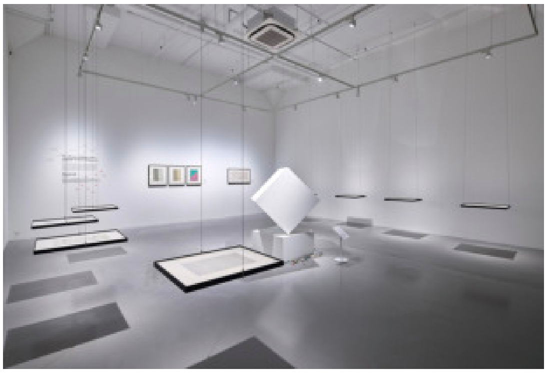
As I was trained as a painter, moving from a two-dimensional to a three-dimensional practice required a significant shift in perception – learning to see and work with actual space. It is not easy; it is a mental retraining that comes from hours of disciplined practice. The final artwork is a partnership between the artist and material, a process of uncovering the inherent beauty and form that each material possesses, rather than imposing a will upon it.

Which artists' ideas or artworks have influenced you the most, and how do their ideas continue to inspire your work?

The work of [English sculptor] Rachel Whiteread has had a profound influence on me. I was deeply inspired by her method of casting the negative space of domestic objects and rooms, giving a solid, tangible form to the void. She made the invisible visible.

This idea directly informs my own process, and I constantly use the idea of the negative space to determine the positive shape of my work. It's a fundamental way of looking and thinking for me: I don't just look at the clay; I look at the space around and within it.

This practice coincides perfectly with my core interest in ambiguity and "in-between-ness". By giving equal importance to the negative and the positive, I challenge the rigid definition of what is the object and what is the void. This interplay is a physical manifestation of seeing the world not in black and white, but in the rich, interconnected grey areas where both things exist at once. ◆ AG



ABOUT PRESTIGE GALLERY

Prestige Gallery, founded in 2019 and based in Singapore, focuses on presenting significant modern and contemporary artworks from Southeast Asia and beyond. The gallery emphasises expressionism, abstraction, contemporary ink, and the broader trans-Asian art history. With a strong commitment to research, curatorial innovation, and cross-cultural dialogue, Prestige Gallery has earned recognition for rediscovering and repositioning historically overlooked artists vital to the region's cultural memory.

AUDREY ZHANG 张鹤馨

Audrey Zhang is the owner of Prestige Gallery. Formerly a director at the BBC and CCTV, she brings a humanistic, documentary-driven storytelling sensibility to the field of art and collecting. Grounded in Southeast Asia's multicultural context, Prestige Gallery is committed to fostering a mature and sustainable art ecosystem. Its mission is to cultivate a new generation of collectors while empowering society, enterprises, and families through art as a source of cultural insight and long-term value. In an era of rapid technological acceleration, the gallery views art as a vital space for reflecting on core human values – creating room for empathy, cross-cultural understanding, and meaningful dialogue beyond data and efficiency.

Both a seasoned collector and a mother of three, Audrey believes art should extend beyond the confines of the white cube and be meaningfully integrated into everyday life. Through her advisory work with high-net-worth collectors, private banks, and family offices, she supports the development of collections grounded in cultural depth, historical awareness, and enduring legacy.

KENNETH LIU 刘辰浩

Kenneth Liu is a curator at Prestige Gallery, working closely with artists, art professionals and collectors on the development of exhibitions and curatorial frameworks. He received formal training in arts and cultural management at the National University of Singapore, following earlier studies in media and communications at the University of Melbourne, Australia.

Over the past few years, Kenneth has been involved in exhibitions and cultural projects across different institutions, developing a sustained engagement with Singapore and Asia's contemporary art and cultural landscape. His curatorial approach is shaped by research and critical interpretation, with a focus on how exhibitions can create meaningful connections between artworks, their contexts, and contemporary audiences, while remaining attentive to both local conditions and broader regional perspectives.

"Cry Now" extends this approach through a curatorial position shaped by Kenneth's long-standing personal attentiveness to nature and environmental change. Rather than treating ecology as an abstract theme, the exhibition approaches it as a lived condition that unfolds from large-scale environmental concerns to the small, often overlooked details of everyday life and human behaviour. It considers how individual actions, sensitivities, and responsibilities are entangled within broader ecological systems. By inviting viewers to engage first on an emotional level, "Cry Now" seeks to reframe ecological crisis not only as a subject of representation, but as an ethical and experiential question that speaks directly to one's own relationship with the natural world.

CHIMP CHANGE:

How Sierra Leone's National Animal Is Reshaping Conservation

By: **Sarah Kingdom**

An estimated 35 percent of the Sierra Leone's forest cover has disappeared since 2000. As the forests shrink, so do Sierra Leone's chimpanzee population and habitats

Inland from Sierra Leone's capital city, Freetown, the Western Area Peninsula National Park, is a narrow chain of hills that occupies the heart of the Freetown peninsula. The area has pristine rainforest, mountainous terrain, idyllic waterfalls, a biodiversity hotspot, and the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary. But the park is under threat. This once almost 18,000-hectare National Park is a fast-shrinking wedge of forest, hemmed in by the country's capital. Once gone, it will be impossible to get back. Satellite imagery shows that the national park has lost a quarter of its forest cover since 2016. As the forest disappears, the number of orphaned chimps at Tacugama grows.

It all started in 1988, with Bala and Sharmila Amarasekaran driving through the Sierra Leonean countryside. About 250 kilometres from Freetown, they passed through a village where they saw an emaciated, orphaned chimpanzee tied to a tree as a pet. "From the moment the chimp gazed up at us and hugged us, my wife and I were moved. We knew if we left this little guy behind, he would die," Bala said. They paid $20 for him. This one-off mercy mission soon happened again. One rescued chimp became seven, all housed in a makeshift shelter in the garden of their Freetown home. In dire need of space, Bala and Sharmila began campaigning to set up a reserve within the Western Area Peninsula National Park. Seven years later, in 1995, they finally received permission, and the 40-hectare Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary was born.

As news of the sanctuary spread, so did reports of more captive chimps in Freetown. Owners voluntarily surrendered chimps, while authorities confiscated others under the Wildlife Conservation Act. By 1997, 24 chimps called the sanctuary home. Some bear the physical scars of bush snares and mistreatment, with missing hands or scars from deep lacerations. Others have mental scars from growing up without mothers or display a deep mistrust of humans. Tacugama is a haven for these chimpanzees, giving them a second chance.

Along the way, Bala became something of a legend in Sierra Leone. He managed Tacugama through the country's brutal 11-year civil war, military coups, and the Ebola and COVID outbreaks, pushing chimps into the national consciousness and lobbying for these primates to become the official national animal. In 2019, after world-renowned primatologist Jane Goodall visited the ssanctuary, the chimpanzee finally became Sierra Leone's national animal and the new face of tourism. It was a celebratory moment for Tacugama. "This is great for us," says Aram Kazandjian, Tacugama's development manager. "The government now prioritises chimp protection. Being the national animal means it is prohibited to kill, sell, eat or keep them at home." But as Bala says, this is not the end of the battle. "It took us 25 years to get them declared the national animal."

▸
Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary
is a hub for conservation, education,
and ecotourism

Renato Granieri

“From the moment the chimp gazed up at us and hugged us, my wife and I were moved. We knew if we left this little guy behind, he would die.” – Bala Amarasekaran

▼
The sanctuary allows mothers to look after their young in peace

▶
The chimps at Tacugama are free – and ready to have some fun

The nursery currently holds 40 infants. One of the most recent rescues arrived with gunshot wounds to the head and chest, most likely hit by stray bullets aimed at his mother. "We're taking in rescues at an alarming rate, despite our efforts. In 2022, we rescued 10, all babies," says Aram. Since 1995, Tacugama has rescued and rehabilitated approximately 200 West African chimpanzees. "Scientists have proven that every time you have a chimp landing in a sanctuary, 8 to 10 will have died in the wild. So, if you look at the 119 chimps here currently, they probably represent 1,000 that have died," Bala says.

In addition to providing lifelong care for its residents, Tacugama's work is changing and expanding. Beyond housing, feeding and rehabilitating orphaned chimpanzees, Tacugama supports ecotourism and other projects in rural areas – projects designed to help protect wild chimpanzees. Getting local communities to buy into chimpanzee protection takes patience and understanding.

The Tacugama Community Outreach Program (TCOP) targets communities living near chimpanzee populations. Their goal is to achieve sustainable management of natural resources, promote the cultivation of alternative non-vulnerable crops and sensitise people about the need to coexist with chimpanzees. TCOP supports these communities by providing alternative livelihood initiatives, including fruit and tree planting, livestock farming, and rice production. The goal of these alternative initiatives is to eliminate the dependency on bushmeat hunting and deforestation and to provide communities with sustainable income sources.

In recognition of Tacugama's successes, the Sierra Leonean government asked them to help manage two additional national parks in the country – adding Outamba Kilimi and Loma Mountains National Parks to their portfolio. So far, they have planted 80,000 trees in Moyamba in the south of the country. This connected five patches of fragmented forest, creating the country's first wildlife corridor and helping to restore the natural habitat for wild chimps. They planted an additional 70,000 trees in Loma Mountains National Park for the same reason, with 90,000 cashew, coffee and cocoa being grown in the buffer areas. These cash crops will provide alternative incomes for the local communities. They will also plant 90,000 trees in Outamba Kilimi National Park this year.

Part shelter, part educational facility, and part tourist attraction, Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary attracts visitors from across the world. The staff offers twice-daily sanctuary tours. Tacugama also has an eco-lodge. ◆ **AG**

▶
Tacugama and its staff placed chimps on the map

▶▼
Caring for the chimps at Tacugama

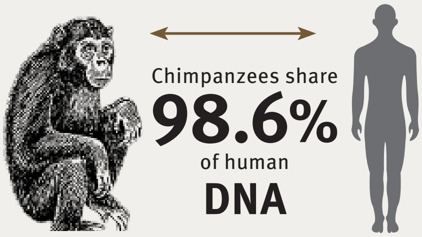
Renato Granieri

Renato Granieri

Renato Granieri

Renato Granieri

CHIMP FACTS



Chimpanzees share
98.6%
of human
DNA

20,000
The number of western chimpanzees in **Sierra Leone** in the **1970s**

Sierra Leone
AFRICA

5,500
The number of chimpanzees **left in Sierra Leone** by **2008**

Critically Endangered

The conservation status of chimpanzees according to The International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species

CONSERVATION STATUS

Threatened

EX EW **CR** EN VU NT LC

Critically Endangered

Threats

Agriculture, logging, development, hunting for bushmeat and the illegal pet trade

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* This article originally appeared in Issue 02 of This Wild Earth's publication (2025). Republished with permission from This Wild Earth. *www.thiswildearth.com/publications-library*

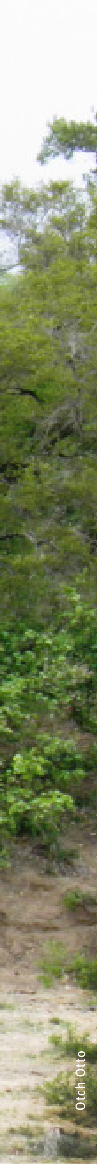
The Elephant in the Room

By: **Otch Otto**

As debates continue over how to manage Africa's expanding elephant populations, one thing is clear: human choices and inaction are at the core of the crisis. Delayed decisions today may demand drastic interventions tomorrow.

After speaking with conservation experts like Dr Ian Whyte, Dr Sam Ferreira, Dr Corli Wigley-Coetsee, Dr Brian Child, Dr Salomon Joubert and others, one thing becomes undeniable: managing elephant numbers is among the most complex conservation dilemmas Africa faces. Here is how we got here and where we go next.

Sketch by Graham Kearney



Otch Otto

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ELEPHANTS IN KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

When Kruger National Park (KNP) was proclaimed in 1889, there were no elephants. They recolonised the area from Mozambique, with the first sightings recorded in the Letaba-Olifants region in 1905. Systematic population monitoring began in 1958. By 1967, aerial surveys estimated the population at 6,586 – three times higher than the 1964 count. Fearing ecological degradation, park authorities imposed a cap of 7,000 and began culling.

This policy remained until 1994, when growing animal rights opposition led to a moratorium. Conservationists drafted new management strategies in 1999 and reviewed them in 2008 but have seen little implementation. Meanwhile, elephant populations, capable of growing at up to seven percent annually, have surged to around 35,000 in KNP alone by 2025. Further, the KNP Byproducts Processing Plant, designed to process up to 2,000 elephants per year, was also shut down in 1994.

Much of the pressure comes from beyond Africa's borders. Countries rich in elephants are constrained by international policies shaped largely by nations with no elephants and no direct stake in their impact.

Today, conservationists face a harsh reality. Decades of inaction have pushed us from a position of manageable control to the brink of environmental collapse. If we continue to delay, the eventual interventions may be far more traumatic.

POPULATION MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

1. Non-Intervention

Letting nature take its course is the least invasive approach for elephants. But it comes at the highest ecological cost. Nature will eventually limit the population, but only after severe environmental degradation and widespread suffering.

KNP has already seen a decline from seven large trees per hectare to just one. Iconic species like marula and knob thorn are now scarce. While the loss of large trees is visible, the destruction of shrubs and the collapse of lesser-known dependent species is even more critical and harder to reverse.

2. Translocation

Relocating elephant families is ethically preferable and socially less disruptive. However, it is expensive and only feasible where suitable habitats and political will exist. Southern Africa is already saturated, while places like Chad, Ethiopia, and more recently Angola have too few elephants, but not enough infrastructure or stability for large-scale translocation. Even if scaled up, translocation alone cannot keep pace with rapid elephant population growth.

3. Contraception

Hormonal control was abandoned in KNP after behavioural changes led to calf deaths. A safer method, Porcine Zona Pellucida (pZP), requires vaccinating 10,000 females every 2.5 years. This is an overwhelming and costly process, with no less psychological trauma than culling.

Further, contraception can only stabilise numbers. Reducing numbers would depend on waiting for natural deaths, which typically occur after age 60. This extended timeline, combined with disrupted family structures and loss of elder knowledge, raises further ethical concerns.

Today, conservationists face a harsh reality. Decades of inaction have pushed us from a position of manageable control to the brink of environmental collapse.

4. Range Manipulation

Reducing artificial water sources reintroduces natural pressures that help manage ecosystems, but it does not reduce elephant numbers. Control measures such as fencing and limiting movement can minimise localised damage but do nothing to address reproduction rates or long-term population growth.

5. Culling

Despite the controversy involved, scientists confirm that controlled culling is the only viable long-term strategy to reduce elephant numbers, especially after the ban on chemical and other invasive methods. The most humane approach is a brain shot at close range.

Culling yields sustainable meat, hides, and ivory, which can fund conservation and benefit local communities. Yet it remains fiercely opposed often by groups far removed from the ecological consequences.

WHY UNCHECKED GROWTH IS A PROBLEM

Elephants are ecosystem engineers but when their numbers explode, so does their impact:

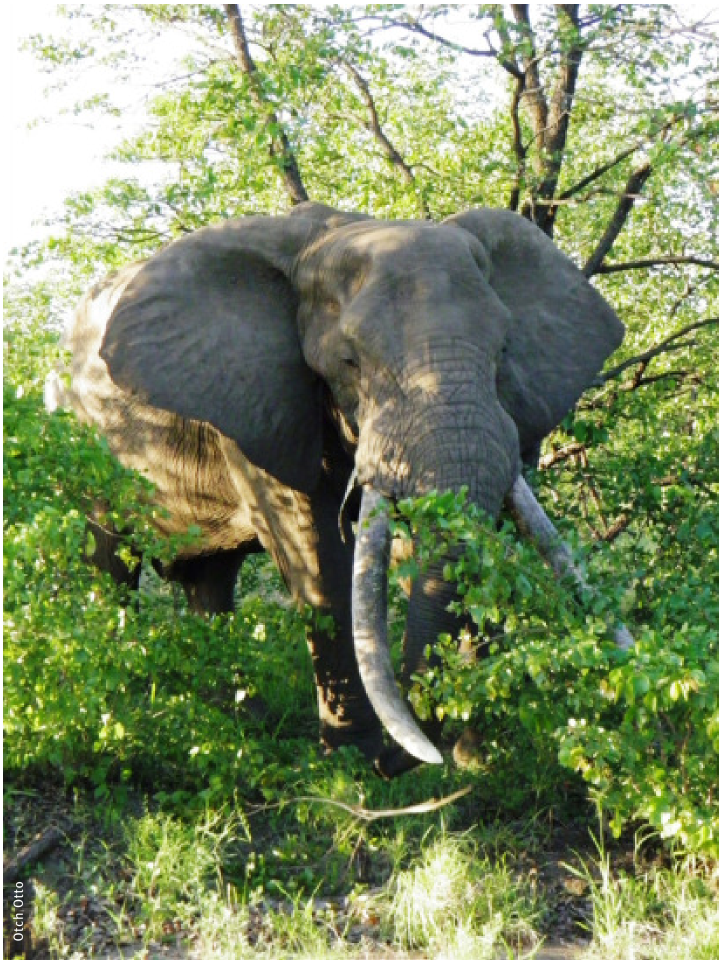
Large Trees: Elephants strip bark and topple trees, destroying habitats for birds, mammals, and insects. In some regions, entire tree species have disappeared.

Shrubs and thickets: These are vital for small mammals and grazing patterns. Their loss disrupts the entire food chain.

Water Sources: High-density areas suffer overgrazing en route to and near waterholes, leading to rapid vegetation loss and displacement of other species.

Ecosystem Collapse: In Botswana's Chobe National Park, elephants have devastated riparian vegetation, reed beds, dense bush, and large trees. Recovery is impossible without reducing grazing pressure.

Otch Otto


Otch Otto

THE CASE FOR PROACTIVE MANAGEMENT

Effective elephant population management requires balancing compassion with ecological responsibility. Translocation and contraception have their place, but they cannot substitute targeted population reduction. A cap, based on expert consensus, is essential for long-term sustainability.

THE WAR AGAINST ELEPHANTS – OR OURSELVES?

We have taken their space, cut off migration routes, and fenced them into areas ill-suited to their scale and behaviour. In truth, we are not at war with elephants. We are at war with ourselves. We continue to reduce their living space while claiming to protect them.

With no natural predators, a seven-percent annual growth rate, and shrinking land, there is no escaping the conclusion. Numbers must be capped. This is not about defeating elephants in a war. It is about securing a sustainable future for them and the ecosystems they shape. The longer we wait, the more severe the intervention will have to be. ◆ AG

This contribution comes from a lifelong elephant lover, daily observer, and passionate protector of this magnificent and intelligent species.

ELEPHANT BENCHMARKS IN AFRICA

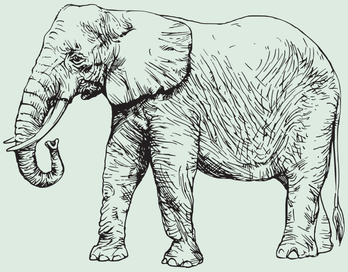
Southern Africa holds over **70%** of the continent's elephants

Botswana alone is home to **30%** of Africa's elephants

AFRICA
Gabon
Congo
Botswana
Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's elephant population grew from **4,000** in 1900 to **76,000** in 1991

Gabon and **Congo** are strongholds for forest elephants



Eastern Africa's numbers have dropped **50%** since 2007 due to poaching

West African populations are small, fragmented, and **extremely vulnerable**

Source: African Elephant Status Report 2016

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Hanging by a Thread:

Can Madagascar's Lemurs Be Saved?

By: **René Laing**

Madagascar is one of the world's richest biodiversity hotspots, but around 28 million people rely on this unique landscape for survival. What does this mean for the threatened lemur populations calling it home?

Hidden on an island off southeastern Africa, Madagascar harbours a spectacular array of biodiversity found nowhere else on Earth. However, its diversity is dwindling at an alarming rate, with grim implications for the lemur populations.

Madagascar is home to 112 unique lemur species. These primates developed in isolation for over 60 million years, resulting in species ranging from the mouse lemur – the size of a hand – to the towering ring-tailed lemur. Sadly, these charismatic critters are vanishing, taking with them their unique ecosystem services as pollinators and seed dispersers.

According to World Bank statistics, over 30 million Malagasy people survive in poverty with over 80 percent living on merely $2.15 per day. Widespread poverty and lack of economic opportunity exacerbate challenges for lemurs as human and natural needs compete.

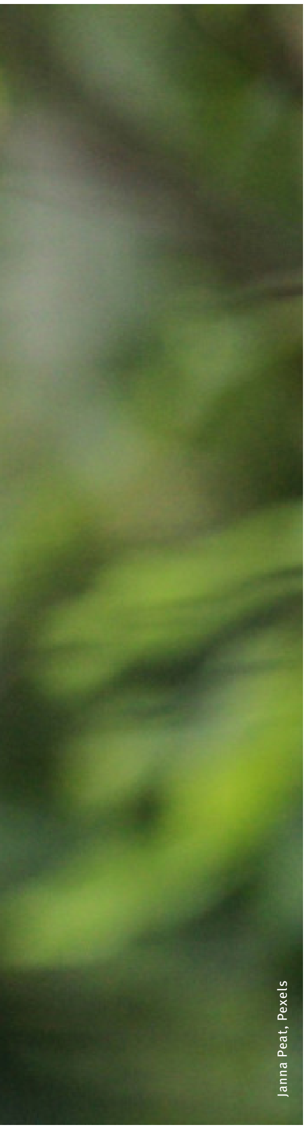
A staggering 90 percent of lemur species face extinction due to a perfect storm of human assaults.

FACTORS AFFECTING LEMURS

Habitat loss and fragmentation

As humans and nature compete for space, the forest disappears to create spaces to grow food and keep livestock. Deforestation affects lemurs' food sources and their ability to move around freely and connect with mates.

Illegal logging is leading the decimation, with rosewood and ebony poached from the forests and protected areas. A 2017 study titled "Timber Island: The Rosewood and Ebony Trade of Madagascar" highlighted at least 350,000 trees fell at the hands of illegal loggers between 2010 and 2015. The timber is in demand in Asia.


Janna Peat, Pexels

◂
Lemurs come in many sizes and colours

The numbers according to The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) SOS Lemurs

There are
112
lemur species
in Madagascar

MADAGASCAR

98%
of all lemurs are
threatened with extinction

Almost a third of lemurs are listed as
Critically Endangered,
one step away from extinction

CONSERVATION STATUS

Threatened

EX EW **CR** EN VU NT LC

Critically Endangered

Lemurs are the
most threatened
mammal group in the world

Brazil is the
only country with
more primates
than Madagascar

SOUTH AMERICA

At least
17 lemur species
have already gone extinct,
the last one **500 years ago**

Poaching

Hunger drives wildlife harvest, although many wild lemurs also become part of the domestic pet trade. A 2016 study estimated that a staggering 28,253 lemurs live captive in Madagascar. This excludes individuals smuggled out of the country.

Unpublished court monitoring data from TRAFFIC, the global non-governmental organisation monitoring the trade in wild plants and animals, shows law enforcement seized more than 60 lemurs between 2021 and 2023 in two Madagascan provinces. These specimens were intended for local bushmeat consumption.

Lemurs have maximum legal protections in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). But without enforcement, this means little. With focused interventions to address root threats, Madagascar's primates could be spared total annihilation. But time is not on their side.

Unsplash

Mégane SSu, Pexels

Getting communities involved

Malagasy conservation organisations and international partners have been raising awareness of lemur conservation within communities, providing economic incentives that support conservation and improve livelihoods. By offering alternatives to unsustainable practices like slash-and-burn agriculture and illegal logging, the initiative can reduce pressures on lemurs. Communities are getting involved with monitoring and enforcement.

Habitat restoration

One of the core strategies of the SOS Lemurs initiative over the last decade has been habitat restoration. Projects have focused on reforestation through tree planting, establishing important corridors between fragmented forests to encourage connectivity, and restoring degraded wetlands to re-establish valuable ecosystem services. This includes some exotic trees to provide direct economic benefits to local communities through charcoal production.

THE LAST HOPE

These challenges lead to action that should secure a better future for the lemurs. Actions have led to IUCN's SOS Lemurs, a two-phased approach involving ecological research and knowledge building, monitoring and recovery, habitat restoration, anti-poaching initiatives, sustainable livelihood generation, and national and global awareness on the plight of lemurs and their habitats. The programme already set up robust ecological monitoring with camera traps, radio collars, and GPS, improving understanding of lemur ecology, distribution, and conservation impact. Kicking off in 2010 with a decade of projects, Phase I laid crucial groundwork. Phase II from 2024 to 2029 aims to build on these foundations.

Although small, there have been victories. There has already been a slight population increase of Perrier's sifaka in the Andrafiamena-Andavakoera Protected Area. They have also discovered golden-crowned sifaka groups in the area. While the threats facing Madagascar's lemur populations remain immense, initiatives like SOS Lemurs demonstrate that recovery might be possible. By addressing the root threats of habitat loss and poaching while empowering communities through sustainable alternatives, the programme shows promise and could help secure a better future for the species. ◆ AG

Learn more: *www.iucnsos.org/initiative/sos-lemurs*

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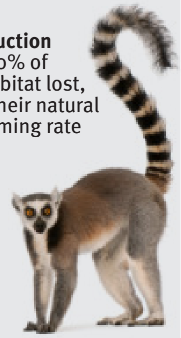
THREATS TO LEMUR POPULATIONS

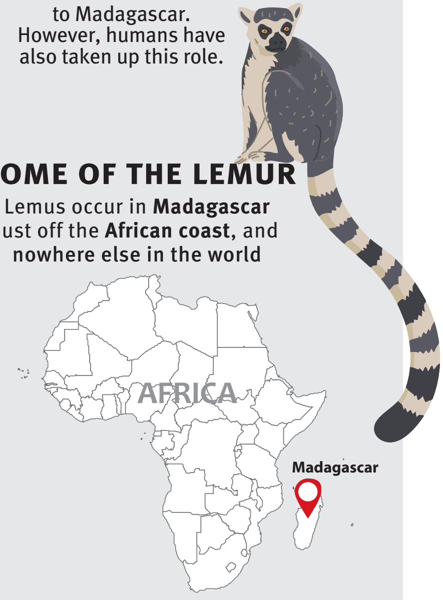


Habitat destruction
With about 90% of Madagascar's habitat lost, lemurs are losing their natural homes at an alarming rate

90%
of habitat lost

Pet trade
Importing primates is heavily restricted globally. Yet animal trafficking remains a multibillion-dollar industry worldwide.

Predation
Lemurs have natural predators in the form of the fossa, a cat-like mammal endemic to Madagascar. However, humans have also taken up this role.



HOME OF THE LEMUR

Lemus occur in **Madagascar** just off the **African coast**, and nowhere else in the world

Botswana's Secret Zebra Migration

By: **Sarah Kingdom**

In the mid-2000s researchers noticed that Botswana's zebras were making extraordinary movements through inaccessible parts of the country. They then realised herds appeared to occupy certain places at certain times of the year, which led to further studies. It's now recognised as the longest overland mammal migration on the African continent.

Researchers placed GPS collars on eight adult zebras in 2012, tracking their journey over two years, ultimately confirming that the zebras completed a round-trip journey of about 500 kilometres each year, making it the longest mammal migration in Africa.

Dr Robin Naidoo, senior conservation scientist at the World Wildlife Fund and lead author of the study, said the distance covered shocked everyone. "Nobody knew that something of this scale, with this much ground covered, was occurring," he said.

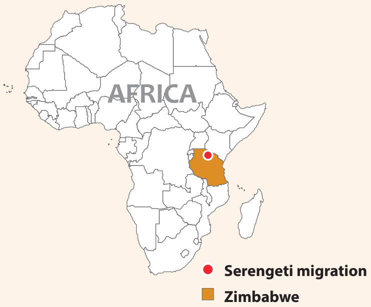
Nxai Pan zebras

BOTSWANA'S ZEBRA MIGRATION

The zebras cover a distance of more than

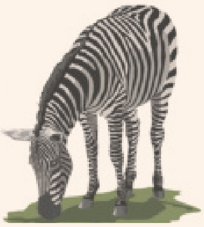
500 KILOMETRES

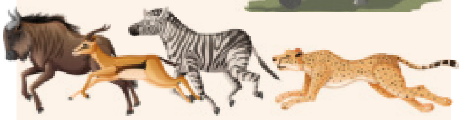
one way during their migration, making it the longest land migration in Africa



Only the famous **Serengeti migration is larger** (in terms of animals migrating) in Africa

The migration is essential for the ecosystem, stopping zebras from over-grazing in other regions

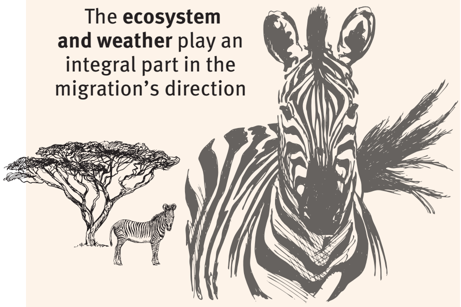




Predators also benefit from this phenomenon, following the zebras and other herbivores and preying on the weak and young

Experts believe the migration pattern is hereditary as **new generations know where and when to go**

The **ecosystem and weather** play an integral part in the migration's direction



African Bush Camps

▲
Desert and delta zebra migration, Boteti River

►
Young zebras engage in play fighting

Botswana's Greater Makgadikgadi includes two National Parks – the Makgadikgadi Pans National Park and the smaller, adjacent Nxai Pan National Park. These are the world's largest saltpans. Nxai Pan National Park covers an area of about 2,578 square kilometres and comprises large pans once part of a super lake that, around 20,000–30,000 years ago, covered much of central Botswana. Unlike the salt-encrusted pans at Makgadikgadi, Nxai Pan is a waterless fossil pan covered in grass with occasional acacia islands. Aside from a few bat-eared foxes and the occasional elephant, the pan is almost devoid of life from June to November.

But this changes when the rains come. The pan comes to life. Seasonal waterholes appear, sweet grasses sprout on the edges of the pan and wildlife arrives. Giraffe, elephant, springbok, impala, oryx, red hartebeest, and kudu appear from the desert mirage, flocking to the area for the seasonal food and water. Most impressive of all the new arrivals are the zebras. The new grass is high in protein and minerals, two to three times more nutritious than the grasses of the delta. More than 30,000 zebras make this journey to the Nxai Pan annually, travelling almost directly south from Chobe to Nxai Pan, crossing territory predominantly inaccessible to people.

The zebras follow two main migration routes. When the rain comes, zebras that spent the dry season in the Okavango, start moving from the southeastern part of the delta to the Makgadikgadi Pans. Those from the Chobe floodplains of the Caprivi Strip in northeastern Namibia head to Nxai Pan.

As the rains begin to fall in the Nxai Pan area early in December, the zebras depart southwards from the Chobe floodplains. Most arrive in Nxai Pan National Park two or three weeks later, covering roughly 250 kilometres in an almost straight line. Others take a less direct route, with some stopping at Seloko Plain before joining the rest a few weeks later. The herds disperse throughout Nxai Pan National Park, where they stay for about three months before returning north. This is the perfect time and place for the females to give birth. You will see countless long-legged, playful zebra foals running and gambolling from February to March.

Surprisingly, their return journey isn't usually as direct or quick as their route south, with most of the zebras taking around 80 days to reach the more permanent water system of the Chobe and Kwando-Linyanti rivers, and typically travelling anywhere from 500 to 800 kilometres to get there.

Botswana's zebra migration is one of Africa's best-kept secrets, and a chance to see thousands of zebras moving across the Botswana landscapes is something few travellers will ever experience. ◆ AG

Sibylle Brodmann

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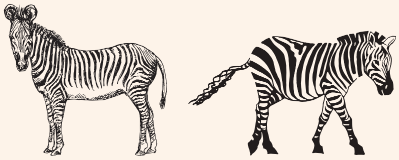
SEE IT FOR YOURSELF

You can reach Nxai Pan National Park by self-drive, organised safari or flying in. The main entrance to Nxai Pan National Park is just off the A3, the main road from Maun to Nata. From Maun, the distance to the entrance gate is 138 kilometres (2 hours) plus 30 kilometres (1 hour) from the gate to the pan. From Nata, it is about 160 kilometres. For direct flights, Helicopter Horizons offers charter flights to Nxai Pan from Maun. Flights take around 45 minutes and offer breathtaking views of the saltpans.

Just as the zebra's home in Nxai Pan is only seasonal, so is African Bush Camp's Migration Expeditions Camp. This eco-sensitive temporary camp is only available from December 1 to March 31, but there's nothing makeshift about it. Four Meru-style canvas tents come with comfortable beds and ensuite bathrooms with basins and bucket showers. There is also a spacious communal dining, lounge tent, and a chef who conjures incredible meals.

There are also two campsites at Nxai Pans National Park. The main one is South Camp with 10 camp spots, near the second entrance gate, and is best for wildlife spotting. The second is at Baines Baobabs, next to the Kudiakam Pan, with three camping spots.



AFRICA
Botswana

Find out more: *www.africanbushcamps.com/experiences*

Thailand's Second Roar

Text by: **Andrea Nisbet** (**ECO**)
Research and Scientific Contributions:
Susie Weller Sheppard (**Panthera**) **and Amanda Whalen** (**Panthera**)

How conflict zones became crucibles for recovery

▼ ▶
The Indochinese tiger remains one of the most endangered big cats on Earth

Panthera

The forests of Eastern Thailand's Dong Phayayen-Khao Yai (DPKY) complex stretch across rolling mountains and valleys, their canopy dappled with sunlight. Once scarred by conflict and the belief that tigers no longer roamed here, this landscape now tells a different story: pawprints pressed into soft earth, camera-trap flashes of striped coats, and GPS collars transmitting signals from a species once thought lost. The contradiction is stark. How could a former conflict zone become one of the last remaining strongholds in mainland Southeast Asia where Indochinese tigers persist?

Two decades ago, scientists and rangers made a discovery few dared imagine: Indochinese tigers were still here. That moment transformed the complex from an overlooked expanse of forest into a critical frontier for tiger conservation. The sense of revelation was palpable, not unlike an explorer stumbling upon a hidden stronghold. Where silence suggested absence, evidence now spoke of survival.

Panthera

Panthera

For Indochinese tigers, the picture remains fragile. Once spread across mainland Southeast Asia, their range has shrunk dramatically. Today, Thailand holds the tigers' last strongholds. Within DPKY, an estimated 20 individuals remain, likely the remnants of populations that once moved between Thailand and Cambodia.

These cats show promising survival and reproduction, but lasting recovery depends on restoring prey populations, reconnecting fragmented habitats, and reducing human pressures. Despite the vast expanse of the forest, tigers remain concentrated in the east of the complex; a reminder that protection here is both fragile and vital. Meeting these challenges requires coordinated, science-driven action.

Protection has become the foundation of survival. Panthera, the global wild cat conservation organisation, has taken up this mantle through its Tigers Forever programme. Active across seven tiger-range states, the programme's goal is to increase tiger numbers at key sites by at least 50 percent within a decade.

In Thailand, in collaboration with the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) and other partners, Panthera is working to strengthen protection in key tiger habitats. This collaboration supports the DPKY Wildlife Research Station with technical guidance from the Thailand Tiger Project and Khao Nang Rum Wildlife Research Station (DPKYWRS), a DNP-led initiative that originated alongside the department's 2017 campaign to establish DPKY as Thailand's second home for tigers.

This collaborative infrastructure has already yielded tangible results. In the first six months, scientists fitted GPS collars on three tigers, including two sisters, within the Thap Lan National Park in DPKY. Each collar transmits valuable data on movement, prey use, and survival, thereby strengthening protection efforts. Each signal is a heartbeat of hope for the species' survival.

A recent study by Thailand's Department of National Parks, supported by Panthera, suggests that DPKY's tigers are stable, reproducing, and surviving at encouraging rates. If trends continue, the population could double – an extraordinary prospect in a region where tigers have vanished from nearly every other landscape.

Panthera

Panthera

▲ A tiger roaming the forest captured on camera trap footage

DPKY's role is now symbolic and strategic. With sustained protection and addressing prey scarcity, the complex could become Thailand's second tiger stronghold, complementing the Western Forest complex. The Thailand Tiger Project acts as a bridge between rediscovery and recovery, laying the groundwork for future generations of tigers to reclaim their historic range.

The irony that frames DPKY is more than a narrative device. It is the reality of conservation in the 21st century. Forests scarred by conflict and neglect have now become sanctuaries. Here, a tiger population has proven resilient. And Panthera, together with local partners, has shown that persistence and science can bend the arc of decline toward recovery.

The Indochinese tiger remains one of the most endangered big cats on Earth, its survival uncertain and its story unfinished. Whether DPKY becomes a footnote or a cornerstone depends on choices made now to secure prey, strengthen patrols, and resist trafficking.

Against all odds, the tigers of Eastern Thailand endure, their stripes threading through the undergrowth. This corner of Thailand now carries the weight of a species' future, and the promise that dedicated conservation can tip the balance toward survival. ◆ AG

For more information on the global work of Panthera, visit *www.panthera.org*

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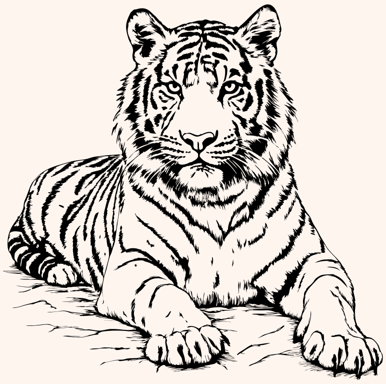
TIGER POPULATIONS AROUND THE WORLD



100,000

Number of tigers
a century ago

Fewer than

4,000

numbers by the
early 2000s

4,500

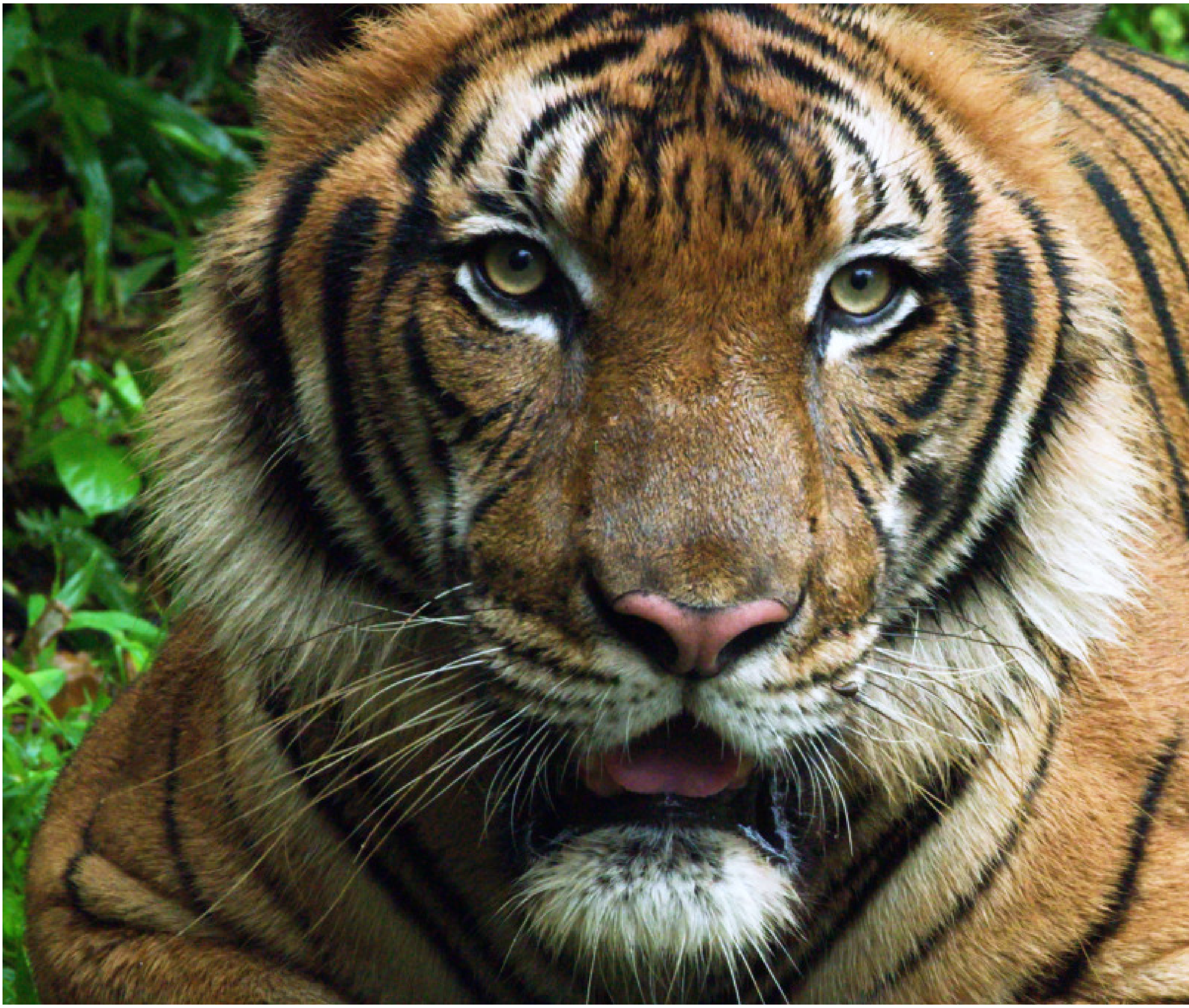
The number of tigers according to an IUCN assessment in 2022, a 40% increase (up from 3,200) between 2025 and 2022*

*Experts caution this may reflect better counting rather than true recovery.

50 YEARS LATER:

The Vietnam War's Enduring Effect on the Tiger Trade

Text by: **Rob Pickles,** Counter Wildlife Crime Lead for Panthera



What many assume is a free-standing wildlife trafficking problem is deeply woven into the social, economic, and cultural histories of Vietnam and Malaysia.

Nuvista TV

Fifty years after the Vietnam War ended, its aftershocks still play out in unexpected ways. In Southeast Asia, the war influenced the illegal tiger trade spanning Vietnam, Malaysia, and beyond. What began as wartime survival and cultural resilience has, over time, fed a cross-border black market in tiger parts, one that these countries are now working to dismantle.

Against the backdrop of lost lives, shattered communities, and devastated landscapes, focusing on something like the illegal tiger trade might seem narrow. But what many assume is a free-standing wildlife trafficking problem is deeply woven into the social, economic, and cultural histories of Vietnam and Malaysia.

A WAR THAT DISRUPTED MORE THAN BORDERS

The Vietnam War left behind a staggering ecological toll. Bombing, napalm, and defoliants such as Agent Orange destroyed up to 30 percent of Vietnam's critical forest habitat. That ecological crisis came alongside a human one. With medicines in short supply, many communities revived traditional remedies using herbs and animal products, blending ancient and modern Vietnamese medicine.

By the 1990s, as Vietnam's economy grew, so did spending power. Expensive wildlife remedies, long associated with vitality and strength, became affordable to more people, and became a trend.

◀
The Malayan tiger is a subspecies that is native to Peninsular Malaysia

VIETNAM'S TIGERS VANISH, ATTENTION TURNS SOUTH

Sketch by Graham Kearney

By the early 2000s, Vietnam's wild tiger population had vanished. Scarcity redirected demand across the South China Sea. Malaysia, with more intact forest and a surviving population of Malayan tigers, became an attractive source.

The route between Vietnam and Malaysia existed. After the war, Malaysia took in Vietnamese refugees. Over time, that humanitarian corridor turned into labour migration. By the 2000s, Vietnamese workers filled jobs in Malaysia's palm oil, timber, and manufacturing sectors, many near tiger habitats.

Some workers encountered animals and saw a way to supplement their income. With help from Malaysian traders, this evolved into organised poaching networks. What began as a small-scale activity expanded to include high-value forest goods, such as agarwood.

Vietnamese harvesting teams in Thailand and Laos became the backbone of these networks. The infrastructure was there: shared language, established routes, and an expanding market.

Quang Binh became one of the main provinces for poachers travelling overseas. Hammered by wartime bombing and natural disasters, residents developed bushcraft survival skills they later used for poaching abroad, including in Malaysia. Their story is one of economic need intersecting with global demand.

The consequences for Malaysia's wildlife were devastating. As demand surged, so did pressure on the Malayan tiger. Poaching, compounded by habitat loss, drove the population into freefall. By 2021, fewer than 200 Malayan tigers remained.

▼
Fewer than 200 Malayan tigers are thought to remain

Nuvista TV

TURNING HISTORY INTO LEADERSHIP

Neither Malaysia nor Vietnam created the demand for tiger parts alone, nor can either end it alone. Both have taken real steps towards conservation.

Malaysia strengthened its wildlife laws in 2010, mobilised over 1,000 community rangers, and formed the National Malayan Tiger Task Force in 2021. Vietnam introduced tougher penalties in 2019 and remains a committed party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.

In 2025, the two nations signed a comprehensive strategic partnership, naming security and defence cooperation as shared goals, a sign that isolated efforts may be ending.

LESSONS FROM THE PAST

This shared history offers three key takeaways.

First: war changes ecosystems and societies. The destruction of Vietnam's forests and healthcare systems hurt tigers and shifted how people related to nature, medicine, and survival.

Second: cultural practices are not static. What began as traditional healing became a luxury trend. Conservation must address cultural roots and economic shifts.

Finally, solutions must cross borders. The tiger trade is transnational, and so are the forces driving it – from poverty to prestige to migration. Conservation must be transnational, too.

A NEW CHAPTER FOR TIGERS

Vietnam and Malaysia's intertwined past can now become a foundation for something new.

The strategic partnership offers a framework for dismantling the Malaysia–Vietnam tiger trafficking problem. This requires cross-border information sharing and joint counter-trafficking strategies targeting key points along the supply chain. Both countries can prioritise closing opportunities for the illegal movement of wildlife products and finances, coordinating investigations against key players.

The financial and transport sectors also have levers to pull, from freezing traffickers' assets to tightening screening procedures. Governments and NGOs can support rural development and training programmes to shift communities away from the illegal trade.

Conservation is about saving tigers and supporting people. Fifty years after the Vietnam War, the chance to turn a difficult legacy into a model for ecological recovery is real. ◆ AG

* This article originally appeared in Issue 04 of This Wild Earth's publication (2025).
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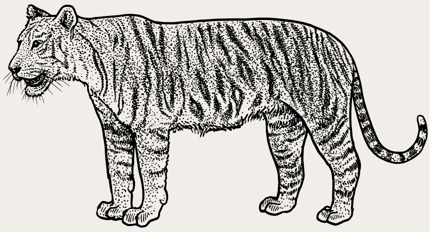
KEY FACTS

30%

Percentage of forest destroyed during the Vietnam War



Early 2000s

Vietnam's tiger population basically vanished. The focus shifted to the Malayan tiger

Fewer than

200

Number of Malayan tigers remaining in 2021. They are listed as Critically Endangered

CONSERVATION STATUS

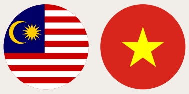
Threatened

EX EW **CR** EN VU NT LC

Critically Endangered

2021

Formation of the Malayan Tiger Task Force



2025

Malaysia and Vietnam sign strategic partnership

Bridging Cultures to Secure a Future for Owls

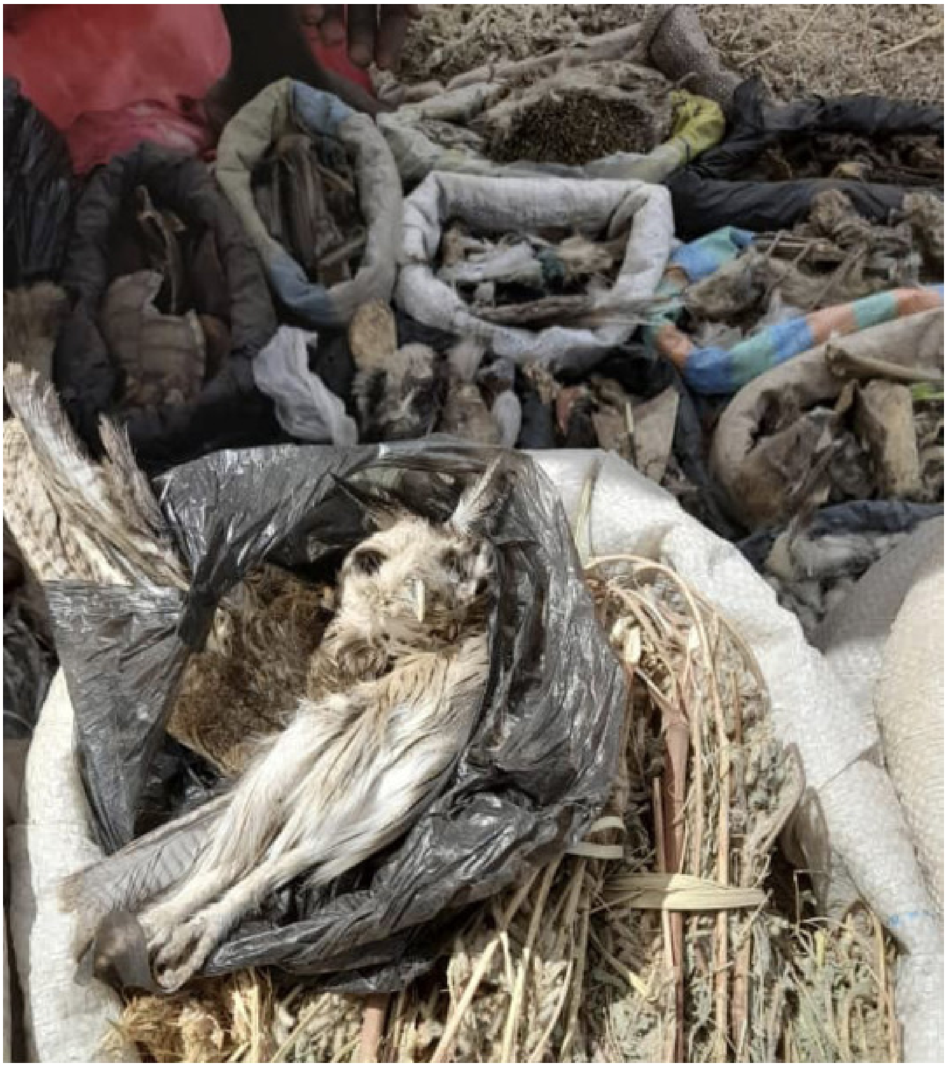
Zimbabwean conservationist Joan Banda takes us on a journey through her career, including her work in Nigeria, as she delves deep into the mysterious world of belief-based practices and the owl trade.

Jean van der Meulen/Pexels

▲
Barn owl

I found my path to conservation by daring to explore my environment while growing up, often wandering in the bush with my brother and more alone as I grew older. How people coexist with wildlife and the varying levels of love-hate relationships as man continues to interact with nature creatively has always fascinated me.

My first shot at making an impact was by researching how livestock farming communities surrounding the Matopos National Park in Zimbabwe could coexist with the wildlife in the park. This was from 2018 to 2019.



◂
Northern white-faced owl carcass found at one of the traditional medicine markets

The idea was to recommend sites that could manage varying levels of regulated livestock grazing so that the communities' livestock have access to foraging areas and the wildlife in the park continued to flourish.

In addition, I advocate for human and nature's coexistence in urban areas. I do this through the Matabeleland (a province in Zimbabwe) Youth Conservation Society, which I co-founded with my colleagues and friends. Through the society, we gather like-minded youth for bird watching and other nature activities to get them to appreciate nature more.

My most exciting adventure to date began in 2023, when I received a scholarship to study at the A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI) at the University of Jos, Nigeria. I dared to venture deeper into unchartered lands when I decided my studies would focus on belief-based use and owl trade in Nigeria. Coming from an African home, family and friends met my decision with mixed feelings. Given the mystical nature of owls, I surprised those around me, particularly by going away so far from home. I had fears of my own. This study was primarily social, and I spoke none of the over 500 dialects in Nigeria.

In order to grasp the extent of danger faced by these understudied birds, I joined an encouraging team that comprised my supervisors from the Nocturnal Avian Ecology Lab at APLORI. They were Dr Adams Chaskda, Dr Talatu Tende and my senior colleague Iniunam Iniunam, who navigated the uncertainties and complexities of fieldwork with me during my entire project and stay in Nigeria. We collected data in communities surrounding six Legacy Key Biodiversity Areas in Nigeria's northern and southern regions.

◄▲
Joan Banda assesses senior community members' familiarity with different owl species

We also visited several traditional medicine markets in both regions, which was an eye-opening experience.

We made a real impact. Most of the people we spoke to during our survey asked why we chose owls, and we got to sing the praises of the ecological importance of these unsung heroes. We changed some attitudes for the better right away, while others would still need more time.

As for my family and friends who were unsure of my research passions, they have witnessed that I have lived to tell the tale, and owls are special birds like all other species. And like all typical African households, the word will go everywhere before we even publish our findings in greater detail – for which you should stay tuned.

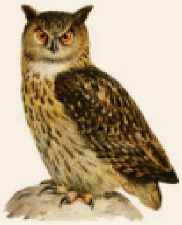
I also hope to inspire other conservationists to seek out the "sacred" – they will surely live to tell great tales. I am grateful to Mr A.P. Leventis for allowing me to study at APLORI and the Raptor Research Foundation for funding this research through the African Raptor Leadership Grant. ◆ AG

* This article originally appeared in Issue 01 of This Wild Earth's publication (2025). Republished with permission from This Wild Earth. *www.thiswildearth.com/publications-library*

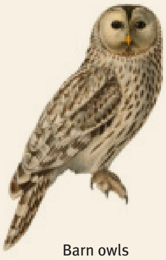
OWLS BY THE NUMBERS

International Ornithological Committee (IOC) recognises
254
species of owl

There are two families of owls:
typical owls (Strigidae)
and **barn owls (Tytonidae)**



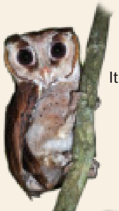
Typical owls
(Strigidae)



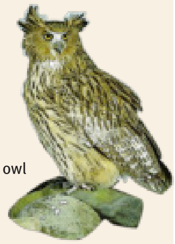
Barn owls
(Tytonidae)

6
Number of
Endangered
owl species
EN

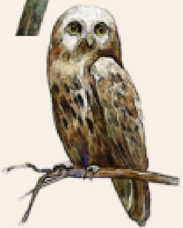
The **Itombwe owl** *(Tyto prigoginei)*, a species of barn owl found in the Albertine Rift montane forests of east-central Africa, is **one of six Endangered species.** The others include the **Forest owlet** (*Athene blewitti*), endemic to central Indian forests; **Blakiston's fish owl** (*Ketupa blakistoni*), native to China, Japan, and the Russian Far East; and the **Moheli scops owl** (*Otus moheliensis*), which is only found on the island of Mohéli, one of the Comoro Islands, a group of volcanic islands in the Mozambique Channel.



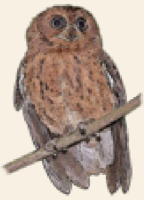
Itombwe owl



Blakiston's fish owl



Forest owlet



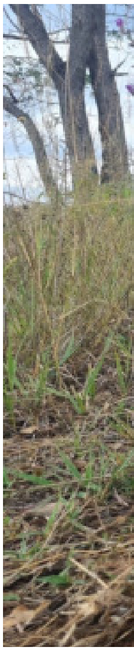
Moheli scops owl

SCALES OF INJUSTICE:

The Tragic Tale of the Pangolin

By: **René Laing**

Clad in armour, a tongue flicking for ants, and waddling on hind legs like something prehistoric, the pangolin could easily be mistaken for a mythical creature. But pangolins are heartbreakingly real, and so is their plight.



Gareth Thomas

Gareth Thomas

Pangolins are quiet, nocturnal wanderers. They don't roar like lions or trumpet like elephants. They go about their business, snuffling through soil for ants and termites. For many nature lovers, a wild pangolin sighting would be the ultimate bucket-list tick, but encounters are rare. Yet, this shy creature is now the most trafficked mammal in the world, simply because poachers have time on their hands.

But these elusive foragers are more than just rare sightings. They are crucial ecosystem engineers. By consuming thousands of ants and termites daily, pangolins help control ant populations, protect vegetation, and aerate the soil as they dig. Their quiet work beneath the surface keeps natural systems in balance.

Pangolins have long held symbolic and spiritual significance, said to bring rain and protect those who cross their path. Indigenous communities in South Africa once lived in balance with the pangolin. But today, that balance has shifted. All four Asian species are now either Endangered or Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List due to the unscrupulous demand for their scales. As a result, traffickers have shifted their focus to African pangolins.

▲

Pangolins love digging in soil to get to their food source

◄

Pangolins walk on their hind legs

PANGOLINS BY THE NUMBERS

287

TONNES

of pangolin scales intercepted **between 2016 and 2024**

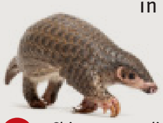
8

PANGOLIN SPECIES

four in **Asia**, and four in **Africa**

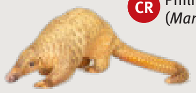
3 SPECIES

are **Critically Endangered**, one step away from extinction in the wild



CR Chinese pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*)

CR Philippine pangolin (*Manis culionensis*)

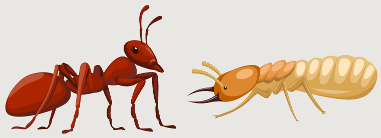


CR Sunda pangolin (*Manis javanica*)

70

MILLION+

ants and **termites** eaten by one pangolin **each year**



Nicci Wright, co-chair of the African Pangolin Working Group, explains that local demand for meat and traditional medicine may have been sustainable on its own. "But the commodity chain has changed, and pangolins are now being poached purely for their scales," she says.

A recent study titled "Scaly Trade: Analyses of the Media Reports of Pangolin Scale Interceptions within and out of Africa" reviewed 130 scale seizures reported between 2016 and 2024, amounting to nearly 287 tonnes. Most originated in Central and West Africa, particularly Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, with China, Vietnam, and Singapore as key destinations.

Since 2023, they have increasingly recorded intra-African seizures, suggesting better enforcement, developing smuggling tactics, or new trafficking routes. Nigeria, Cameroon, and Uganda have emerged as key transit hubs. Despite protection and an Appendix I listing by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species since 2016, trade continues, driven by demand for traditional medicine and weak enforcement in some regions. But statistics alone rarely stir public outcry. That is where stories like Kulu's come in.

THE POWER OF ONE: KULU'S JOURNEY

For many, hearing about a poached animal they have never seen means nothing. But pangolins are no longer in the shadows of conservation. The silence has been broken by the Netflix documentary, *Pangolin: Kulu's Journey*, directed by Oscar-winner Pippa Ehrlich (*My Octopus Teacher*). It follows the rescue of Kulu, a baby Temminck's pangolin torn from the wild by poachers, and the emotional journey of his caregiver, Gareth Thomas.

Gareth Thomas, still grieving a personal loss, found unexpected solace in a baby pangolin he named Kulu. Ripped from the wild by poachers, Kulu clung to life. As Gareth helped him heal, something shifted. Through Kulu, Gareth reconnected with the living world. And through this film, so might we.

This journey puts a face to the crisis. And once you've looked into his eyes, the crisis has a name, and it stays with you.

Once you've looked into his eyes, the crisis has a name, and it stays with you.

Simon Needham

Geran de Klerk/Unsplash

THE FRONT LINES OF RESCUE

In South Africa, the Johannesburg Wildlife Veterinary Hospital, which also treated Kulu, has become a global leader in pangolin care. Since 2017, they've treated over 200 pangolins, the first facility in the country to treat, rehabilitate and release pangolins.

But things have changed over the years, says Dr Karin Lourens. In the beginning, poachers received small fines and no jail time, she recalls. In 2014, authorities handed down a seven-year sentence, and since then, there have been several eight- and 10-year sentences.

This tough sentencing, however, may be pushing poachers into other provinces. "We think that the lower number in Gauteng is because of the harsher sentences now becoming more of a risk," explains Lourens.

▲
A pangolin walking off into the bush while feeding

◄
Pangolins are hard to find, yet one of the most trafficked animals in the wild

MAJOR PANGOLIN SCALE SEIZURES IN THE NEWS

Nigeria
October 2024
9.4 tonnes seized in coordinated raids across Lagos, Kano, and Kaduna, linked to the **deaths of over 30,000 pangolins**

Indonesia
November 2024
1.2 tonnes intercepted in Medan en route to China. At least **5,900 pangolins killed**. They arrested four suspects, including three army officers

Nigeria
December 2024
2.18 tonnes confiscated from warehouses in Adamawa. Part of 16 operations in 2024, totalling **21.5 tonnes**

Hong Kong
January 2025
Record **8.3 tonnes** found in a container from Nigeria, mixed with elephant ivory. An **estimated 14,000 pangolins gone**

Nigeria
April 2025
3.76 tonnes seized in Lagos; **1,900 pangolins killed.** Five suspects arrested

Smugglers are also adapting. Where they once sold pangolins within days, they now delay negotiations for weeks, trying to avoid sting operations. But pangolins cannot survive captivity for long – they eat only live ants and termites. Many arrive barely alive, starving. By the time they're rescued, their chance of survival may be below 10 percent.

Pangolins are among the hardest, most complex, and costly patients. "They're our most expensive species to treat," says Lourens. It can cost nearly 2,000 rand (USD120) per day per animal, and 30,000 rand (USD1,800) for tracking devices and post-release monitoring. Wright adds that post-release monitoring is vital to monitor the pangolin's health up to a year and to determine any territorial disputes.

It is not always easy, yet those involved press on. "What gets me through the horror," says Lourens, "are the success stories. The ones we do get to save and the ones we can release again." Wright agrees: "Knowing that the increased number of organisations dedicated to pangolin conservation, research, rehabilitation and protection are also out there and that this is a global effort, gives us hope." ◆ AG

▼ A pangolin under sedation being tube fed

▶▲ Dr Karin Lourens doing an abdominal ultrasound on a pregnant female to check on the baby

▶ A very sick pangolin, on IV fluids, a heating pad and bean bag on his belly, a special thermometer and a pulse oximeter

Johannesburg Wildlife Veterinary Hospital

Johannesburg Wildlife Veterinary Hospital

Johannesburg Wildlife Veterinary Hospital

HOW YOU CAN HELP SAVE THE PANGOLIN

Donate to the African Pangolin Working Group: Every contribution supports rehabilitation and rewilding of illegally traded pangolins by generating knowledge, developing partnerships, and creating public awareness and education initiatives. *www.africanpangolin.org/contribute*

Support the Johannesburg Wildlife Vet: They have saved over 200 pangolins. Help them save the next one: *www.johannesburgwildlifevet.com/how-you-can-help.html*

Watch *Pangolin: Kulu's Journey* if you are a Netflix subscriber and share it with your community. It could be the story that sparks real change. *www.africanpangolin.org/netflix-pangolin-kulus-journey/#the-film*

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ISSUE 04
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ROAR
THE MALAYAN TIG
IS FADING. ARE WE
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THE DEADLY SECRET BEHIND SEAFOOD LABELS
FAKE FUR, REAL IMPACT:
LEOPARDS GET A LIFELINE
REDRAWING THE MAP:
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PANGOLINS FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL
CERTIFY TO SURVIVE:
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TRADED TO DEATH:
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A FUTURE OF HOPE
UNITED FOR WILDLIFE:
NATURAL PRIDE:
DUTY AND DANGER:
01
THE RETURN OF THE SPIX'S MACAW

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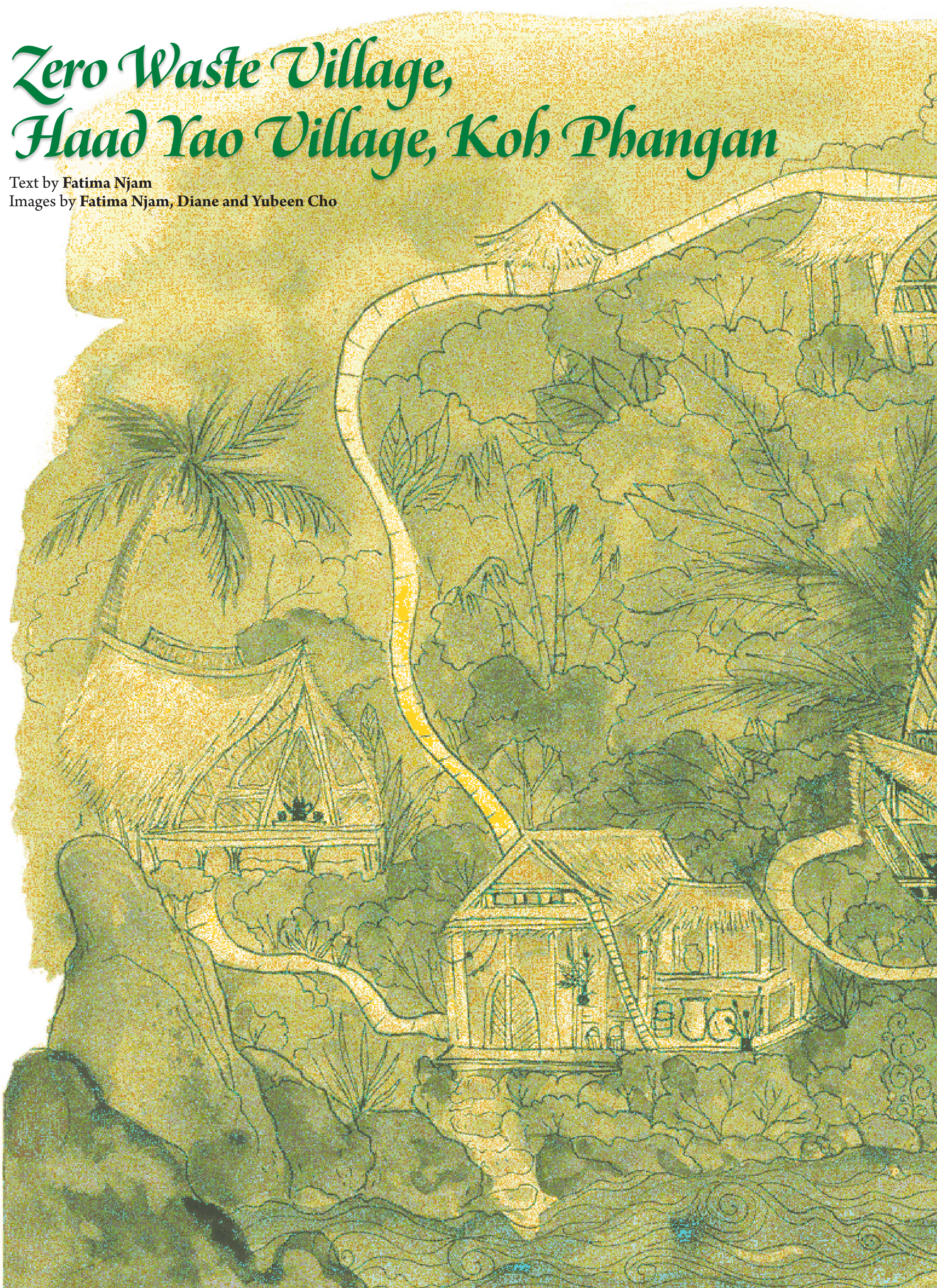
Zero Waste Village, Haad Yao Village, Koh Phangan

Text by **Fatima Njam**
Images by **Fatima Njam, Diane and Yubeen Cho**



Watercolour by Maria Shiryaeva

An egret picks her way delicately among the boulders that stand sentinel over the turquoise waters of the bay. Under the mirror-like surface, aquatic life is bristling with fervour. A hopeful octopus tentacle curls out towards a tiny fish that darts off, leaving the tentacle to merely startle a pufferfish that is wallowing in the reef shallows. The puffer's tiny, panicked fins propel its disproportionately large body a little too close to a giant clam with psychedelic green and turquoise lips. Those algae-laden lips close in alarm, before gently widening again. This comedy of errors plays out every morning. And even the most cynical of hedonists cannot help but be moved by its innocence.

As a guest plucks the snorkelling mask off their face, and stepping out of the sea, onto the grass, the stirring of a breeze carries the fragrance of herbs being pounded: lunch is being prepared. Across the lawn, fed by compost made from food waste, a natural, chemical-free pool beckons. The surface of the pool reflects the whimsical structures that are the Zero Waste Village, a bamboo eco-luxury lodge where visitors can experience a stay in natural materials. These are buildings that breathe, made from a giant grass that is strong and as resilient as steel. Each bamboo structure is built by a different team we brought together to share skills and passion for sustainable, regenerative building.

While neighbours cut down trees so their guests could enjoy the view, we kept rescuing and replanting. We watched our bird population treble as koels, herons, egrets, and racquet-tailed drongos call out to each other, making for a serene soundtrack. Sunlight filters through a canopy of leaves, an eagle swoops low, birds scatter in the whispering tamarind, mango and Indian almond trees, red dragonflies zig zag over sun-dappled grass. The living spaces at the Zero Waste Village are strewn with triangular Thai sofa beds lovingly woven by the hands of village artisans as they swapped stories of furtive liaisons, sudden deaths and births. Coconut skin and drift wood make the lamps that light the walkways. Bamboo chairs with ergonomic backrests allow tired muscles to slump into oneself. Imagine yourself a guest here.

The graphic beauty of the leaf roof panels built by a cooperative of women in the southern province of Songkhla might just snag the visitor's eye.

Time slows, and the heat releases its hold over the noon hour as you consider the virtues of cold oolong tea against a cheeky glass of white. The ebb and flow of the water against the rocks starts to lull you into a second delicious slumber. Before you release your hold on reality, your eyes linger over details. The bundling of bamboo into the curvature of the ceiling. The graphic beauty of the leaf roof panels built by a cooperative of women in the southern province of Songkhla might just snag the visitor's eye.

We came upon these communities of women a few hours south of Surat Thani, and just past Hat Yai, towards the Malaysian border. There are also communities of crafters we engaged in Thale Noi, where the brackish water canals empty into the sea. Under gigantic palm trees, you will find the women who assembled our roof panels, laughing in the fields at new recruits, hoisting a thousand panels as if it were an effortless task. Along the lily-pad strewn lake shores are the women who wove the rugs we walk on, feet cushioned by river weed. The women's cooperatives offer equal ownership, provide child care on mats, cauldrons of hot food, and a jovial atmosphere to work in.

Back in the province of Surat Thani, a boat from Koh Samui brought us back to Koh Phangan and the Zero Waste Village. In the library, a stack of books follows the lives of the craftsfolk that create the comfortable everyday objects we use in the houses. Baskets and tables woven from Yaan Li Pao from neighbouring Nakhon Si Thammarat. Pottery coaxed into shape by the hands of ceramicists in Koh Phangan. Rugs from pandan leaf and from Krajud (river weeds) woven and dyed by artisans at their pace. Perhaps the visitor decides not to surrender to a nap, and calls for a slow coffee. A bamboo coffee dripper appears. It was made, like our furniture, right here in the workshop on our hill, with materials left over from our construction. The coffee is roasted just two bays away, sourced from hill tribe farmers in Chiang Rai. Switching on a lamp bathes you in the gentle light that sieves through lamp shades made from coconut skin, discarded by the trees, collected and shaped by us, immersed in fire retardant and strengthened with tree sap glue. We find comfort in knowing where everything we use comes from.

SAPPAN WOOD
AVOCADO
MANGOSTEEN SKIN
Safflower
onion skins

Perhaps the visitor decides not to surrender to a nap, and calls for a slow coffee. A bamboo coffee dripper appears. It was made, like our furniture, right here in the workshop on our hill, with materials left over from our construction.

As we crafted these bamboo houses, we stood on site, ensuring that our homes wrapped around trees and boulders, rather than dislodging them. Too many times we have watched with heavy hearts as bulldozers rip verdant shrubs and trees from the earth, leaving the land exposed and prone to erosion and overheating. On an island, this is particularly dangerous. After the rains, helpless landowners watch swathes of precious land slide into the sea, untethered by the roots that once held them in place, suffocating the coral reefs. We made mental notes to spare our land that indignity and to move materials slowly, mindfully without allowing machines to trample the ecosystem.

Past the cliffs that wrap around the bay and shelters the visitor from the outside world, something else is stirring. Not far from where the visitor lounges, past pollinator hill, past the tangle of tamarind and mango trees, a hive of activity has gripped the Zero Waste Village community outreach team.

Curious youth from local schools are lobbing questions at our Thai architects and builders: "Are you really zero waste? What does that mean? Do you make everything? Like even the lightbulbs?"

Our architect, Lucky from Bamboosaurus Studios, replies: "It means we try to find a use for everything that is left over." Our natural dye instructor says, "The leftovers of the food you eat is turned into compost here, so we can feed our plants with it. We make our houses from bamboo, a grass that can replace itself in a few weeks. Our construction waste is kept, cleaned and recycled into furniture."

"You don't make the fridge!" says one skeptical youth.

Many fashion brands produce bright coloured clothes that require a lot of energy and waste to make. The chemical dyes are dangerous for the lungs and the hands of those who make them.

"We don't. But the fridge, air-conditioners and water filters, electric bikes and electric car all run on solar power." A buzz of approval met with these words. The children are confused to hear our textiles take dyers and weavers weeks to make. "Why can't you buy normal bedsheets and cushions from the shop?" The mind sifts through memory to find an example that might touch the children: "Please travel with me to Bangladesh in this moment, a huge factory is pouring toxic waste into the river. Families, children are hungry because their fathers cannot find fish. What does the factory make?" The answer is: chemically-dyed clothing that fast fashion brands sell in high street shops like candy to be consumed and discarded. I explain: "Many fashion brands produce bright coloured clothes that require a lot of energy and waste to make. The chemical dyes are dangerous for the lungs and the hands of those who make them. Turning to natural dye was the elegant solution: I, as a consumer, I can make a difference. I can choose to support natural dyers, to buy from them, to support their craft and their family income. You have a choice. You can save children from going hungry because the fish dies and disappears from their rivers." "How?" They ask. "Buy less. Enjoy what you buy for longer. Ask your elders to repair your clothes, if it is stained, re-dye it with natural dye. We can teach you here." "Now?" Their newfound enthusiasm makes me smile. “Yes, we have prepared onion skin dye to show you how food waste can be kept out of landfills and used to create something beautiful. Want to try?”

The following week we find ourselves hosting a group of academics and government officers at the request of a Thai diplomat, and Sirani, an ecologically-aligned travel professional who works with the Tourism Authority of Thailand.

The Thai diplomat, who serves his country in Finland, asks, “I want to ask what motivates you to build like this, but I have a second question also, what motivates you to open your home to the public?” The truth is complex. At first we just saw a piece of land that was being used as a dumping site, littered with broken sinks and toilet bowls, half empty pails of varnish and paint, on a beach that was ringed by boulders, creating a natural mini sheltered bay. We wanted a tiny home, and we saw land that needed to be nurtured and restored. We leased it, hired a few Thai bamboo builders to make us what looked to most people like a glamping structure, but we lived there for two years, studying the land. Now we have built five bamboo structures on the waterfront and seven on the hill. Children in school groups have insisted the house is AI generated. Adult groups say this looks like a Studio Ghibli set. Other visitor groups say it’s a real life version of *Avatar*. None of this was intended. We just wanted a space to live in that was playful, imaginative and used bamboo.

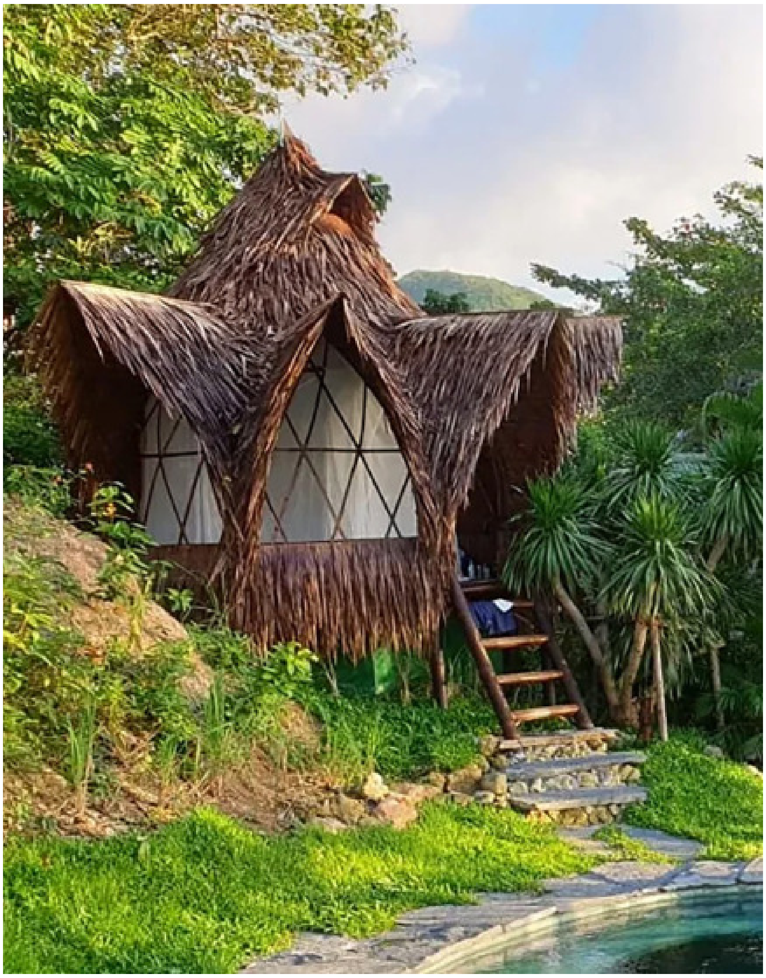
eco print
LEAVES
Reuse
#recreate
RE-PURPOSE
PROTECT THE ISLAND

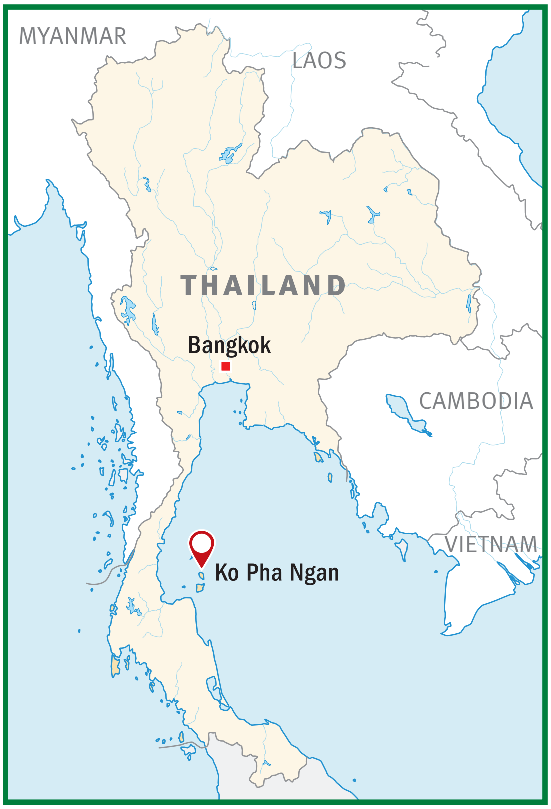
“In the country of my birth, I grew up with my father longing to sleep and wake closer to nature, but our houses were made from concrete in response to the needs of my mother. (Someone ventured: safety?) Mainly: air-conditioning. (People chuckle. I cringe, “Sorry mom, but it’s the truth.”) I remember the suffocating heat during power cuts and rolling government blackouts. I remember there was no way to crack open a window, no space for air to flow or the fragrance of natural foliage to seep in. Air was recycled, artificial. Here we have the sea breeze tinged with the pollen and fresh cut smell of grass. When I met my life partner, and he and I started travelling, we always chose to stay in wood or bamboo spaces. We would leave days unplanned, unbooked so that we would have the luxury of discovering something that would activate our imagination. Looking around at Zero Ware Village, I realise we built the houses we wanted to stay in. Perhaps visitors will rewrite the narrative of what luxury means to them if they experience the smooth textures, the glowing bamboo interiors that need just buffing and oiling to achieve the warmth they exude.

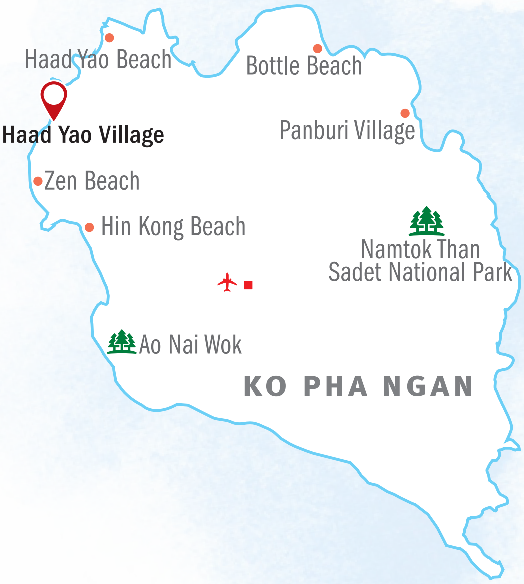
A government officer asks: "What about storms? It's been six years – why doesn't your bamboo house collapse? Are you sure you have not used steel?"

I hear the patient voice of head architect from Bamboosaurus Studios: "Bamboo is tied and slotted along joints, which means that the force of a storm is distributed along the whole structure. Bamboo experts know where to penetrate the bamboo, how far from the nodes." ◆ AG

Houses built by: Bamboosaurus Studios
Designed by Lucky, Nook, Anton Negoda and various Myanmar teams
Details and furniture designed in house by us and Permaculture friends
Website: *www.zerowastevillage.com*




MYANMAR
LAOS
THAILAND
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
VIETNAM
Ko Pha Ngan


Haad Yao Beach
Bottle Beach
Haad Yao Village
Panburi Village
Zen Beach
Hin Kong Beach
Namtok Than Sadet National Park
Ao Nai Wok
KO PHA NGAN

OPINION

The Complete and Utter Failure of COP30

By: **Captain Paul Watson**

SEM AZUL NÃO HÁ VERDE

We need solutions that recognise the rights of all living beings – from microbes to great whales.

– Captain Paul Watson

Sea Shepherd Brazil

For 30 years, the charade has played out – beginning with COP1 in 1995.

In March 1995, 869 delegates from 160 nations and the European Union met in Berlin to acknowledge the urgency of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from human activities. The conference produced no binding measures, but it did recognise the gravity of the problem and the necessity of cutting emissions.

The alarm had been ringing long before. In 1968, the Stanford Research Institute warned the American Petroleum Institute that carbon dioxide from fossil fuels would drive dangerous atmospheric increases with planetary consequences: significant temperature rises by 2000, melting of Antarctic ice, sea-level rise, ocean warming, and shifts in photosynthesis. Earlier still, in 1912, *Popular Mechanics* cautioned that burning roughly two billion tons of coal a year was adding some seven billion tons of CO_2 to the atmosphere – thickening Earth's "blanket" and likely warming the planet within centuries.

The next milestone came in 1997 at COP3 in Kyoto, where delegates adopted the Kyoto Protocol to curb greenhouse gases. It soon proved hollow: countries could set their own rules for approving projects and issuing carbon credits with scant international oversight. U.S. Vice President Al Gore signed, knowing the Senate would not ratify; in 2001, President George W. Bush confirmed the United States would not implement the agreement, leaving it largely toothless.

After Kyoto, COP hopscotched through Buenos Aires, Bonn, The Hague, Bonn again, Marrakesh, New Delhi, Milan, Buenos Aires, and on to COP11 in Montreal (2005). Montreal revisited Kyoto, generated promises, and sustained a fragile optimism – little more. From there, COP drifted through Nairobi, Bali, Poznań, Copenhagen, Cancún, Durban, Doha, Warsaw, and Lima: largely uneventful, mostly dull, a costly carousel.

◂ Chief Raoni and Paul Watson – *Sem Azul Não Há Verde* (Without Blue there is no Green)

Sea Shepherd France

By 2003, Robert Hunter's *2030: Confronting Thermageddon in Our Lifetime* laid out dire warnings that now feel uncomfortably close. I doubt many COP30 delegates have read Hunter – or any environmental thinkers. They certainly didn't read my 2019 book, *Urgent! Save Our Ocean to Survive Climate Change*.

My interest briefly revived at COP21 in Paris (2015). For the first time, the ocean was finally part of the conversation, and I was invited to participate. But the Ocean Forum quickly tilted toward the seafood industry; when their chief concern became how climate change might "affect the movement of the product in the sea", I knew nothing meaningful would follow. My presentation was dismissed as "alarmist".

▲
Captain Watson on stage at COP30 along with Nathalie Gil, President of Sea Shepherd Brasil

I did, however, speak with Chief Raoni of the Kayapó about the connection between Amazonia and the ocean – the planet's two lungs, one green and one blue. Even so, it felt like an exercise in futility, reinforcing my view that COP has become a colossal waste of time.

The roadshow moved on: Marrakech, Bonn (yet again), Katowice, Madrid, Glasgow, Sharm El-Sheikh, Dubai, Baku, and finally Belém. In Glasgow (COP26), Greta Thunberg captured the mood: "No more blah blah blah." COP27 was sponsored by Coca-Cola, as if the Cola Wars had become a contest over who could be the greenest polluter. By COP28, Dr. Sultan Al Jaber – UAE energy minister and chief executive of ADNOC [Abu Dhabi National Oil Company] – chaired as "impartial" president while running a state oil company producing about 3.5 million barrels per day. The dissonance spoke for itself.

Scan the QR code to view the Summit delegate pack
United for Wildlife
Global Summit
Guest

Sea Shepherd Brazil

Captain Paul Watson and Marina Silva, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change of Brazil

Ten years after Paris, I attended COP30 in Belém more out of curiosity than hope. I was invited to present in the Blue Zone yet locked out of negotiations. In those rooms, frank environmentalism is unwelcome; ecological reality and truth are verboten in the backroom patter.

Meanwhile, the United States under President Trump abandoned COP altogether. Canada's leadership offered little better. Instead of confronting fossil-fuel emissions, the government passed measures that facilitate industry by sidelining environmental protections. The difference is only stylistic: outright denial versus polished rhetoric – either way, no real action.

As Greta said, it's all blah, blah, blah – plus photo ops and bullshit.

So, for the first time in a decade, I wandered the Blue Zone, not as a delegate but as an accredited tourist, past national pavilions doubling as investment and tourism showcases – each touting technological fixes, education initiatives, and empty promises. At the Japanese pavilion, three guards refused me entry; when I tried to speak to a representative, a superior intervened to shut me down. Their slogan trumpeted "solutions for the world", yet every solution centred on new technologies for the fossil-fuel industry. I recorded a video suggesting a real solution: stop killing whales. Japan wasn't interested.

> **Ten years after Paris, I attended COP30 in Belém more out of curiosity than hope. I was invited to present in the Blue Zone yet locked out of negotiations.**
>
> – Captain Paul Watson

Sea Shepherd France

Although COP30 was held in Amazonia and more than 3,000 Indigenous people travelled to attend, only about 650 received accreditation for the Blue Zone. In contrast, fossil-fuel executives received roughly 1,600 badges. Coal, gas, and oil were omnipresent – so, too, were the 30,000 people who marched through Belém's hot, humid streets in protest. The most arresting moment came when thousands of Indigenous people surged toward the Blue Zone entrance, forcing the contradiction into global view: the original stewards of the forest barred from meaningful participation on their own land.

My ship, the *John Paul DeJoria*, berthed near the Green Zone alongside Greenpeace's *Rainbow Warrior*. We welcomed hundreds aboard beneath a Brazilian flag altered to replace green with black – mourning the lost forests – and bearing the slogan "*Sem Azul Não Há Verde*" (Without Blue there is no green). And without Green there is no Blue.

Speaking with Indigenous leaders at COP30 confirmed what three decades of these spectacles have taught me: governments, bound to current political and economic realities, are incapable of delivering realistic solutions. Human dominance has driven a steep decline in species and ecosystems. We keep reaching for anthropocentric tools to solve an ecological crisis that demands biocentric thinking.

We need solutions that recognise the rights of all living beings – from microbes to great whales. Ecology's basic laws are not up for debate:

- Diversity: The strength of an ecosystem depends on the diversity within it.
- Interdependence: Species are bound together in mutual reliance.
- Finite resources: Growth has limits, set by carrying capacity. When one species – ours – steals the carrying capacity of others, diversity and interdependence erode, and the system's ability to support life collapses.

Indigenous peoples understand this. They see the world biocentrically and can conceive of biocentric solutions. We need a COP in the heart of Amazonia, presided over by Indigenous leaders, to consider the rights of forests, the ocean, and all living species.

After 30 years, we cannot rely on world leaders to solve climate change. Shackled to the fossil-fuel industry, they arrive for the show – without substance, without action. Environmentalists and Indigenous nations must act – without compromise and without co-option. The alternative is the only thing COP has consistently delivered: more of nothing that matters. ◆ AG

◂ Indigenous people at the Global Climate March in Belém

▾ The official photo from COP30 in Belém, Brazil, 2025

CAPTAIN PAUL WATSON is a Canadian-American environmental, conservation and animal rights activist. A founding member of Greenpeace, Watson established the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society in 1977 and, after leaving in 2022, created the Captain Paul Watson Foundation. Watson has been a prominent speaker and a featured guest at the Asia Dive Expo (ADEX) on multiple occasions.

COP30
BRASIL
AMAZÔNIA
BELÉM 2025

COP VS CLIMATE CHANGE

The United Nations Climate Change Conferences are annual conferences held in the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). They serve as the formal meeting of the UNFCCC parties – the conference of the parties (COP) – to assess progress in dealing with climate change. The first UN Climate Change Conference (COP 1) was held in Berlin in 1995. The most recent, COP30, was held in Belém, Brazil, in November 2025.

The overarching goal of the Paris Agreement, adopted at COP21 in 2015, is to hold "the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels" and pursue efforts "to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels". The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicates that crossing the 1.5°C threshold risks unleashing far more severe climate change impacts, including more frequent and severe droughts, heatwaves and rainfall.

Global emissions have continued to rise since the Paris Agreement was signed. The global average temperature in 2024 was reported as the warmest on record; it was the first year to consistently exceed the 1.5°C threshold. Climate scientists have warned that the world could see its first year of warming above 2°C by the end of the decade.

BRASILCOP30AMAZÔNIA
BELÉM 2025
BELÉM CLIMATE SUMMIT

Ricardo Stuckert

Voices of Change

◆ ◆ ◆ *How young activists are leading Asia's climate fight*

Flooding in Kijal, Terengganu, after heavy rains hit Malaysia in December 2022

Pok Rie/Pexels

The youth climate activist movement in Asia has emerged as a powerful force in the region, fuelled by a growing recognition of the urgent need for climate action. Young people, especially those from countries highly vulnerable to global warming and its impacts, have been at the forefront of demanding stronger policies, climate justice, and sustainable futures. From India to Indonesia, Bangladesh to the Philippines, youth-led groups have united to raise awareness, organise protests, and hold governments accountable for their inaction on climate change.

The movement is driven by a diverse range of young activists, many of whom have faced firsthand impacts of climate change – including extreme weather, floods, and rising sea levels. They are not only demanding environmental protection but also social justice, advocating for the inclusion of marginalised communities who are disproportionately affected by climate disasters.

Groups like Youth for Climate Action (Indonesia), YouthNet Global (Bangladesh), and Youth4Climate (Thailand) are just a few examples of youth organisations leading grassroots initiatives, mobilising international campaigns, and influencing policy decisions in regional and global climate forums, such as the United Nations Climate Change Conferences (COP). These young activists are not only amplifying their voices on social media but also using legal action, advocacy, and innovation to push for systemic change. Their movement is helping redefine the future of climate activism in Asia.

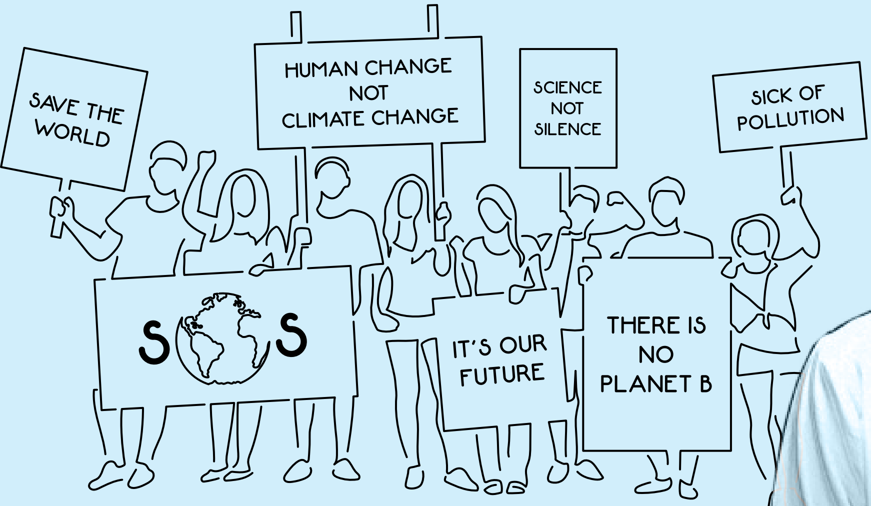
LICYPRIYA KANGUJAM

INDIA

Licypriya Kangujam is a prominent young climate activist from Manipur, India, known internationally for her outspoken advocacy on climate change, disaster risk reduction and children's rights. She began her activism at an exceptionally young age, driven by concerns about how climate-related disasters such as floods, earthquakes and heatwaves disproportionately affect children and vulnerable communities. Often described as one of Asia's most visible youth climate voices, Licypriya has addressed world leaders at major international platforms, including United Nations climate conferences, calling for urgent, science-based action.

Her campaigns have focused on practical solutions as well as policy change. Licypriya has pushed for the installation of climate-resilient infrastructure, improved disaster preparedness and early warning systems, and the inclusion of climate education in school curricula. She has also drawn attention to air pollution, plastic waste and the need for governments to recognise climate change as a child-rights issue.

Despite her young age, Licypriya has received numerous international awards and recognitions, reflecting the global reach of her message. Her activism has not been without controversy, yet her determination continues to spark debate and awareness across Asia and beyond. By insisting that adults listen to the voices of children, Licypriya represents a generation unwilling to inherit a damaged planet in silence.



ZAGY BERIAN
INDONESIA

Zagy Berian is one of Indonesia's most influential young climate activists, known for his leadership in youth-led sustainability and renewable energy initiatives. In August 2025, he was appointed to the United Nations Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change, becoming the first and only representative from Southeast Asia in the group's expanded 14-member third cohort. This advisory body provides practical, outcome-focused recommendations to the UN Secretary-General to accelerate global climate action and elevate the voices of youth in climate policy.

Zagy is the founder of the Society of Renewable Energy (SRE), a national movement that empowers young Indonesians to engage with clean energy solutions and sustainability efforts across the country. Through SRE, he has mobilised a wide network of youth to promote renewable energy awareness and action. Beyond Indonesia, he serves as Regional Facilitator for the Youth Climate Justice Fund in South Asia, supporting grassroots climate justice work driven by young people.

Internationally, Zagy contributes to the youth engagement strategy of the G20 Energy Transition Working Group, collaborates with Indonesia's Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, takes part in the B20 Task Force on Energy, Sustainability, and Climate, and leads the Southeast Asia Youth Forum on Energy under ASEAN. One of his notable grassroots initiatives includes a renewable energy education programme in Pati, Central Java, where he works with farmers to integrate clean energy technologies into sustainable agricultural practices.

Through these efforts, Zagy exemplifies how young leaders from Indonesia are shaping both local and global climate agendas, advocating for justice, collaboration, and inclusive solutions.

MITZI JONELLE TAN
PHILIPPINES

Mitzi Jonelle Tan is a leading youth climate activist from the Philippines and a prominent voice for climate justice in Southeast Asia. She is best known as a convenor of Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines (YACAP), a movement that mobilises young Filipinos to demand urgent and just responses to the climate crisis. Growing up in one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries, Mitzi's activism is shaped by the lived reality of communities facing stronger typhoons, flooding, sea-level rise and displacement.

Her work centres on the idea that climate change is not only an environmental issue but also a social and human rights issue. Mitzi consistently highlights how the crisis disproportionately affects marginalised groups, including coastal communities, farmers, Indigenous peoples and the urban poor. She has been a visible figure in school strikes and peaceful protests, calling for accountability from governments and corporations most responsible for emissions.

Mitzi has represented youth voices at international platforms such as United Nations climate conferences, where she advocates for climate finance, loss and damage mechanisms, and a just transition away from fossil fuels. Through public speaking, organising and media engagement, she challenges narratives that place the burden of action on individuals. Instead, she amplifies collective resistance and solidarity, positioning young people not as future leaders, but as leaders of the present.

BORIM KIM
SOUTH KOREA

Borim Kim is a prominent South Korean climate activist and a key leader of Youth4Climate Action, a youth-led campaign group that has been at the forefront of climate advocacy and litigation in Korea since 2019. She has played a central role in organising and guiding the group's strategy, public advocacy, and long-term campaign planning, helping build its capacity to challenge national climate policy through legal and civic action.

Under Borim's leadership, Youth4Climate Action joined with other activists to push back against what they saw as insufficient government action on climate change. This culminated in a landmark constitutional lawsuit filed initially in March 2020, arguing that the South Korean government's climate policies violated fundamental rights – especially the rights of younger and future generations – to a healthy environment. The petitions asserted that the nation's carbon neutrality framework did not set adequate long-term greenhouse gas reduction targets and therefore failed to protect citizens' constitutional rights.

On August 29, 2024, the Constitutional Court of Korea delivered a historic ruling: It found parts of the country's climate law unconstitutional because they lacked legally binding emissions reduction targets beyond 2030, effectively shifting disproportionate climate burdens to future generations. The court ordered the government and National Assembly to amend the law by February 2026 to include stronger long-term targets. This decision is widely seen as a major climate justice milestone, both in South Korea and across Asia, reinforcing the idea that climate inaction can constitute a violation of constitutional rights.

Borim and her fellow activists describe the ruling not as an endpoint but as a springboard for deeper legislative and societal change toward meaningful climate protection.

SOHANUR RAHMAN
BANGLADESH

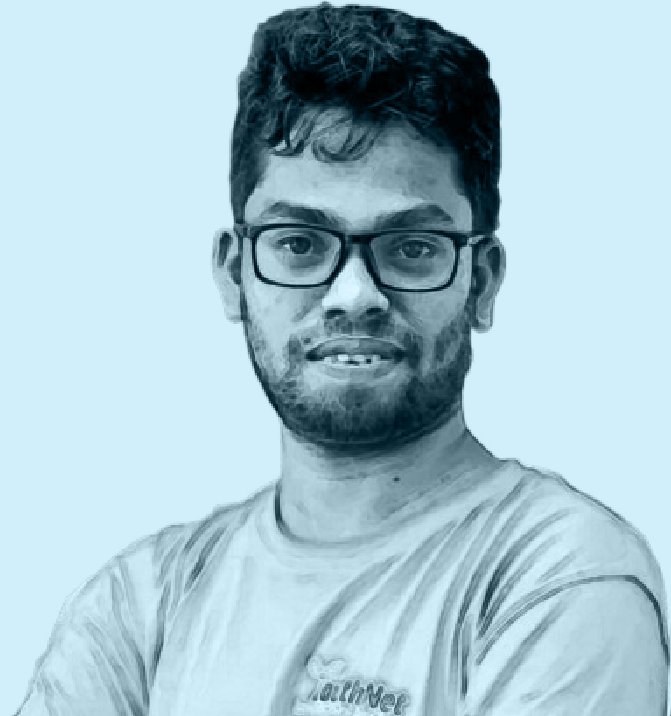
Sohanur Rahman is a prominent Bangladeshi climate activist and youth leader known for his passionate advocacy on climate justice, democratic participation, and community resilience. He is the Executive Coordinator of YouthNet Global (originally YouthNet for Climate Justice), one of the largest grassroots, youth-led climate organisations in South Asia, which he founded in 2016 to mobilise young people and vulnerable communities around climate action and social equity.

Growing up in Bangladesh – a country acutely vulnerable to cyclones, floods, and sea-level rise – shaped his commitment to addressing climate-induced hardship and inequality. His work focuses on amplifying frontline voices, training youth reporters to document climate impacts, and advocating for inclusive, justice-driven climate policies at national and international levels.

In 2024, Sohanur gained global recognition as a Young Activist Laureate at the Young Activists Summit in Geneva, one of five youth leaders honoured for outstanding contributions to environmental sustainability, human rights, and democratic change. In 2025, he received the Green Journalist Award from the Balipara Foundation, highlighting his work in climate communication and storytelling that brings attention to climate-vulnerable communities.

Sohanur has represented Bangladesh at major climate forums including COP29 and COP30, advocating for justice-focused adaptation, safer migration pathways for climate-affected people, and wider youth participation in climate policymaking.

강릉에코파워
잡았다, 기후역적
강릉 안인화력
천만톤온실가스
장난하냐?



JITSAI SANTAPUTRA
THAILAND

Jitsai Santaputra is a Thai climate and energy activist who has emerged as a leading voice for youth-led climate action and just energy transitions in Southeast Asia. She co-founded Youth for Energy Southeast Asia (Y4E-SEA) in 2023, a non-profit that connects and supports young leaders working on equitable transitions away from fossil fuels toward renewable energy across the region. Through Y4E-SEA, Jitsai has helped engage thousands of youths in workshops, policy dialogues, and regional advocacy initiatives.

Jitsai champions inclusive climate leadership, emphasising the meaningful participation of women, youth, and marginalised communities in energy and climate policy processes. Her work integrates creative storytelling, community engagement, and policy advocacy to make complex energy transition issues accessible and actionable. She also serves on the Thailand Youth Climate Council and has moderated major discussions on green jobs and sustainable development in ASEAN, bridging youth perspectives with decision makers.

Internationally, Jitsai was appointed SDG7 Global Youth Ambassador for Southeast Asia by Sustainable Energy for All and TED Countdown for 2023–24, and she has represented ASEAN youth at UNFCCC conferences including COP28 and COP29.

Her leadership was recognised with the REVolutionaries: Steve Sawyer Memorial Award in 2024 from the Global Wind Energy Council, Greenpeace, and REN21, honouring her efforts to drive renewable energy and just transitions in under-served regions of Southeast Asia.

Jitsai continues to advocate for equitable climate solutions that leave no one behind, blending grassroots mobilisation with global policy engagement.

Bye Bye Plastic Bags

Aside from climate change, youth activists across Asia have numerous other environmental issues on their minds, from plastic, air and water pollution to deforestation and biodiversity loss.

Indonesian environmental activists Isabel and Melati Wijsen are best known as the founders of Bye Bye Plastic Bags, a youth-led movement that began in Bali in 2013. Then aged just 10 and 12, the sisters were inspired by a school lesson on plastic pollution and decided to take action against the growing waste crisis affecting their island home. What started as a small local campaign quickly grew into an international movement advocating for a world free from single-use plastic.

The Wijsen sisters combined grassroots activism with strategic engagement, organising beach clean-ups, educational programmes and high-profile events while also lobbying government leaders. Their persistence paid off in 2019, when Bali announced a ban on single-use plastic bags, straws and Styrofoam – a policy widely seen as influenced by their advocacy. Beyond Indonesia, Bye Bye Plastic Bags has inspired teams in dozens of countries, empowering young people to drive change in their own communities.

Isabel and Melati have since spoken at global forums such as the United Nations, the World Economic Forum and TED, emphasising optimism, collaboration and action-oriented solutions. Their work demonstrates how youth leadership, when paired with clear goals and determination, can translate environmental concern into lasting policy impact at both local and global levels. ◆ AG

Find out more at *www.byebyeplasticbags.org*.

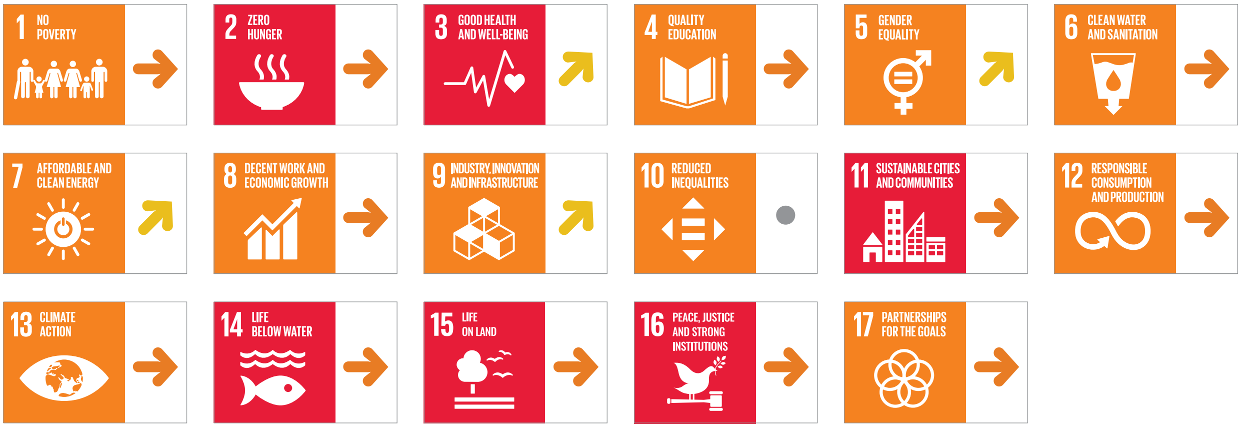
The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are 17 global goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015 to be achieved by 2030. They aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure peace and prosperity for all, covering areas such as health, education, gender equality, clean energy, climate action, and sustainable cities.

1 NO POVERTY
2 ZERO HUNGER
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
4 QUALITY EDUCATION
5 GENDER EQUALITY
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
13 CLIMATE ACTION
14 LIFE BELOW WATER
15 LIFE ON LAND
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

The Status of SDG Progress Globally

Based on the rate of progress since they were adopted by the international community in 2015, **none of the 17 SDGs will be achieved by 2030**. At the global level, SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), SDG 15 (Life on Land), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), are particularly off track, facing major challenges – indicated in red on the dashboard below – and showing no or very limited progress since 2015.



🟥 Major challenges 🟧 Significant challenges 🟨 Challenges remain 🟩 SDG achieved ● Data not available

↓ Decreasing → Stagnating ↗ Moderately improving ↑ On track or maintaining SDG achievement

Source: Sustainable Development Report 2025

The 2025 SDG Index Ranks and Scores

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE
1	Finland	87.0
2	Sweden	85.7
3	Denmark	85.3
4	Germany	83.7
5	France	83.1
6	Austria	83.0
7	Norway	82.7
8	Croatia	82.4
9	Poland	82.1
10	Czechia	81.9
11	United Kingdom	81.9
12	Slovenia	81.2
13	Latvia	81.2
14	Spain	81.0
15	Iceland	80.8
16	Slovak Republic	80.8
17	Estonia	80.8
18	Belgium	80.7
19	Japan	80.7
20	Portugal	80.6
21	Hungary	80.4
22	Italy	80.3
23	Netherlands	80.0
24	Malta	79.3
25	Canada	79.2
26	Switzerland	79.2
27	Greece	79.1
28	New Zealand	79.0
29	Lithuania	78.8
30	Moldova	78.8
31	Ireland	78.6
32	Belarus	78.5
33	Serbia	78.2
34	South Korea	78.1
35	Chile	78.1
36	Australia	77.9
37	Romania	77.7
38	Uruguay	77.4
39	Luxembourg	76.7
40	Cuba	76.5
41	Bulgaria	76.3
42	Ukraine	75.7
43	Thailand	75.3
44	United States	75.2
45	Albania	75.2
46	Argentina	74.8
47	Kyrgyz Republic	74.5
48	Israel	74.5
49	China	74.4
50	Armenia	74.3
51	Russian Federation	74.1
52	Dominican Republic	74.1
53	Maldives	74.0
54	Brazil	73.8
55	Montenegro	73.8
56	Cyprus	73.8
57	Bosnia and Herzegovina	73.8
58	North Macedonia	73.7
59	Georgia	73.7
60	Costa Rica	73.4
61	Vietnam	73.4
62	Uzbekistan	73.1
63	Fiji	72.9
64	Azerbaijan	72.9
65	Peru	72.7
66	Tunisia	72.0
67	Suriname	71.8
68	Morocco	71.7
69	Singapore	71.5
70	Kazakhstan	71.5
71	Jordan	71.0
72	Mexico	70.8
73	Turkey	70.6
74	Bhutan	70.5
75	Colombia	70.5
76	Mauritius	70.3
77	Indonesia	70.2
78	Ecuador	70.1
79	Algeria	70.1
80	United Arab Emirates	69.8
81	Jamaica	69.8
82	Barbados	69.6
83	Iran	69.6
84	Malaysia	69.5
85	Nepal	68.6
86	El Salvador	68.4
87	Philippines	68.3
88	Tajikistan	68.3

🟧 Asian country

Source: Sustainable Development Report 2025

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE
89	Panama	68.2
90	Paraguay	68.1
91	Egypt	68.1
92	Brunei Darussalam	68.0
93	Sri Lanka	67.9
94	Bolivia	67.8
95	Cabo Verde	67.3
96	Turkmenistan	67.3
97	Oman	67.1
98	Belize	67.0
99	India	67.0
100	Mongolia	66.7
101	Cambodia	66.4
102	Guyana	66.3
103	Gabon	65.6
104	Namibia	65.5
105	Saudi Arabia	65.2
106	The Bahamas	65.2
107	Qatar	65.1
108	Nicaragua	64.8
109	Botswana	64.5
110	Bahrain	64.4
111	South Africa	64.1
112	São Tomé and Príncipe	63.9
113	Iraq	63.9
114	Bangladesh	63.9
115	Venezuela	63.8
116	Myanmar	63.6
117	Senegal	63.5
118	Kuwait	63.3
119	Côte d'Ivoire	63.2
120	Ghana	63.1
121	Laos	62.6
122	Rwanda	62.3
123	Kenya	61.9
124	Lebanon	61.7
125	Honduras	61.7
126	Trinidad and Tobago	60.6
127	Guatemala	59.9
128	Sierra Leone	59.4
129	Togo	59.2
130	The Gambia	58.4
131	Syria	58.4
132	Mauritania	57.9
133	Cameroon	57.8
134	Benin	57.8
135	Tanzania	57.7
136	Eswatini	57.5
137	Zimbabwe	57.4
138	Guinea	57.2
139	Malawi	57.1
140	Pakistan	57.0
141	Mali	56.3
142	Uganda	55.8
143	Lesotho	55.6
144	Burundi	55.5
145	Ethiopia	55.4
146	Zambia	54.8
147	Nigeria	54.7
148	Comoros	54.7
149	Djibouti	54.3
150	Burkina Faso	53.8
151	Mozambique	53.7
152	Papua New Guinea	53.4
153	Guinea-Bissau	53.1
154	Congo, Republic	52.8
155	Angola	52.8
156	Haiti	52.5
157	Liberia	52.5
158	Madagascar	51.0
159	Niger	50.3
160	Afghanistan	49.1
161	Sudan	49.1
162	Congo	48.2
163	Yemen	47.7
164	Somalia	46.1
165	Chad	46.0
166	Central African Republic	45.2
167	South Sudan	41.6

🟧 Asian country

Source: Sustainable Development Report 2025

SDG Progress from 2016 to 2023 in ASEAN

The ASEAN SDG Indicators Progress Report 2025 aims to provide information on the current status of the selected SDG indicators in comparison with the baseline period by showing the progress made during the period of 2016 to 2023. Based on identified trends, the report provides further assessment on whether each indicator is on track to meet its target by 2030. The Report was prepared by the ASEAN Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators (WGSDGI), comprising representatives from all ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Secretariat's Statistics Division (ASEANstats).

KEY FINDINGS

🟩 On track or target met 🟧 Fair progress, but acceleration needed 🟥 Stagnation or regression

1 NO POVERTY

The proportion of population living below national poverty line **reduced** from 13.3% in 2016 to **10.8%** in 2023

Total government spending on **health has increased**, while spending on **education has decreased** in 2023

Education
2023: 13.9%
2016: 17.8%

GOV

Health
2023: 12.1%
2016: 7.7%

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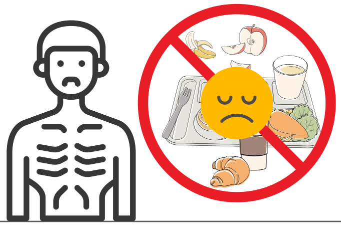
2 ZERO HUNGER

The prevalence of undernourishment has **slightly improved** from 7.3% in 2016 to **6.5%** in 2023



The proportion of individuals who experienced moderate or severe food insecurity has **reduced** from 16.5% (2016) to **15.7% (2023)**

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3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The maternal mortality ratio **improved** from 234.5 per 100,000 live births in 2016 to **164.3 per 100,000 live births** in 2023

The under-five mortality rate **reduced** from 31.0 per 1,000 live births in 2016 to **22.6 per 1,000 live births** in 2023

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4 QUALITY EDUCATION

From 2016 to 2023, access to electricity **rose** from 78.9% to **85.3% in primary schools** and from **86.9% to 89.3% in secondary schools**, while **upper secondary schools reached near-universal coverage at 98.0%**

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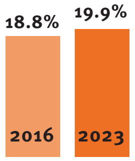
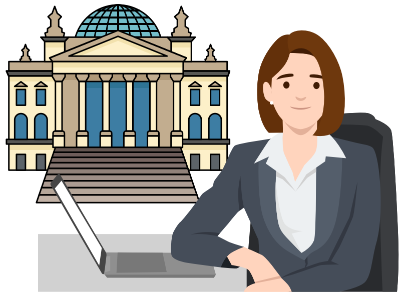
5 GENDER EQUALITY

The proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 18 has **dropped** from 12.4% in 2016 to **9.7%** in 2023

The proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments has **increased modestly to 19.9%** in 2023

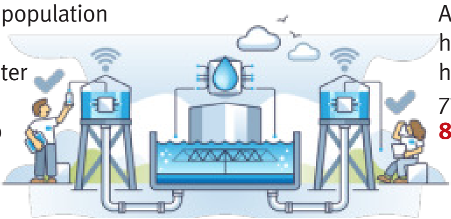




Source: The ASEAN SDG Indicators Progress Report 2025

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

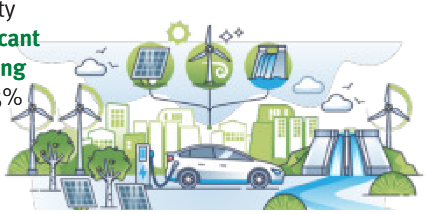
The proportion of the population with access to safely managed drinking water **increased modestly** from 41.5% in 2016 to **44.0%** in 2023



Access to basic hygiene services has **improved** from 77.5% in 2016 to **84.4%** in 2023

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Access to electricity has shown **significant progress, increasing steadily** from 88.5% to **95.7%**

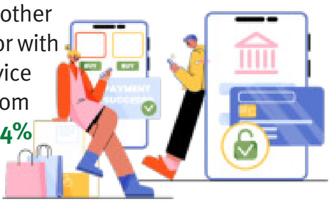


Proportion of renewable energy in total final energy consumption has **declined modestly** from 21.2% in 2016 to **20.4%** in 2023

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

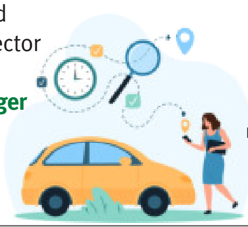
Unemployment rate **declined marginally** from 3.9% to **3.8%**, while the youth unemployment rate **decreased significantly** from 11.2% to **8.5%**

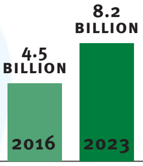
Proportion of adults with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider **increased** from 60.5% in 2016 to **76.4%** in 2023



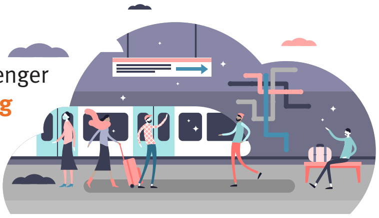
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Between 2016 and 2023, transport sector recorded **strong growth in passenger movement**, driven particularly by road transport





Rail transport also showed **steady growth,** with passenger numbers **increasing** from 2.6 billion in 2016 to **2.8 billion** in 2023



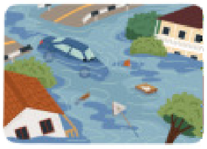
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Growth rate of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40% of the population has **increased** from 5.2% in 2016 to **5.8%** in 2023

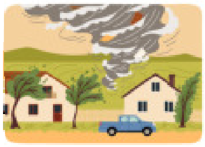
Proportion of tariff lines applied to imports from least developed countries and developing countries with zero tariffs **slightly increased** from 59.3% in 2016 and **63.9%** in 2023

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

The number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to climate-related disasters per 100,000 population **increased significantly**



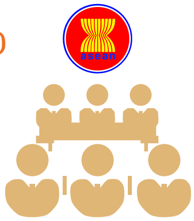
2,921 persons (2016)



6,386 persons (2023)

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

8 ASEAN Member States (AMS) have met reporting obligations for at least one hazardous waste or chemical agreement in 2023, which is **improved** as compared to 2016

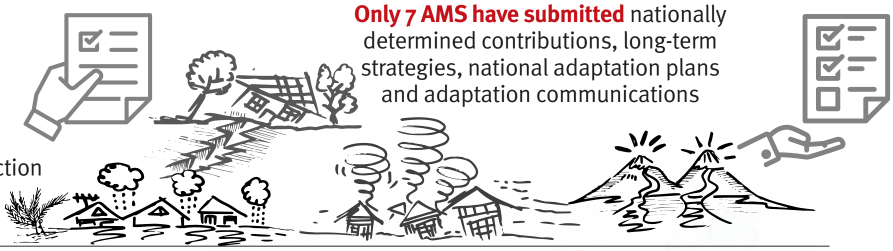


Installed renewable energy-generating capacity in developing countries **rose significantly** from about 60.1 watts per capita in 2016 to **74.9 watts per capita** in 2023

13 CLIMATE ACTION

9 AMS adopted and implemented national disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030

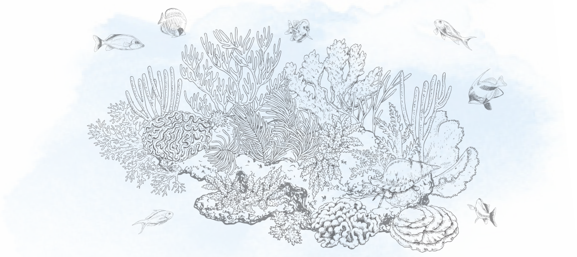
Only 7 AMS have submitted nationally determined contributions, long-term strategies, national adaptation plans and adaptation communications



14 LIFE BELOW WATER

Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas in the region has shown **notable progress, increasing** from 3.2% in 2016 to **4.4%** in 2023

PROTECTED AREAS



15 LIFE ON LAND

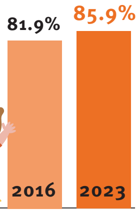
Forest area coverage **slightly increased to 45.7%** in 2023 as compared to 45.6% in 2016

Protected area coverage of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) **has increased** from 30.8% in 2016 to **33.0%** in 2023

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

The proportion of unsentenced detainees has **declined** from 28.8% (2016) to **27.6% (2023)** of the total prison population

The proportion of children under five whose births were registered with a civil authority **showed improvement** in 2023

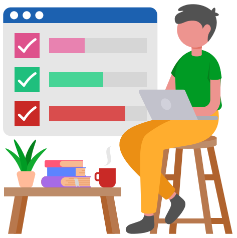


17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

The number of fixed internet broadband subscriptions per 100 population **increased**

2023: 11.8

2016: 5.7



The proportion of individuals using the internet **increased**

2023: 82.0%

2016: 50.6%

Total government revenue as a proportion of GDP and proportion of domestic budget funded by domestic taxes **decreased**

	Government revenue	Domestic budget
2016	16.2%	67.5%
2023	**15.7%**	**59.6%**

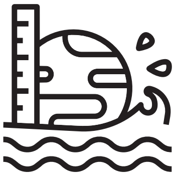
Sea-Level Rise: Island Nations at Risk in Asia and Oceania

For island nations in Asia and Oceania, sea-level rise is not a future threat – it's happening now. What disappears beneath the waves isn't just land, but livelihoods, identities, and histories

WHAT IS SEA-LEVEL RISE?

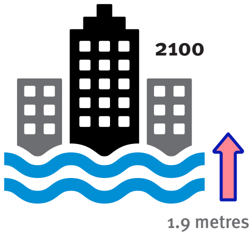
Sea-level rise happens as **oceans warm and expand and land-based ice melts**. For island nations, even a few centimetres can mean **flooding, erosion, and the loss of freshwater and homes**

THE BIG PICTURE



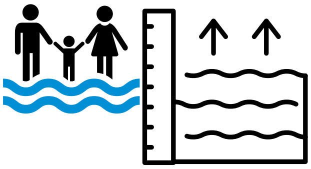
Global sea levels have risen **21–24 cm since 1900**

Sea levels in Asia–Pacific are **rising faster than the global average**



By **2100**, sea levels could rise **up to 1.9 metres** under high-emission scenarios

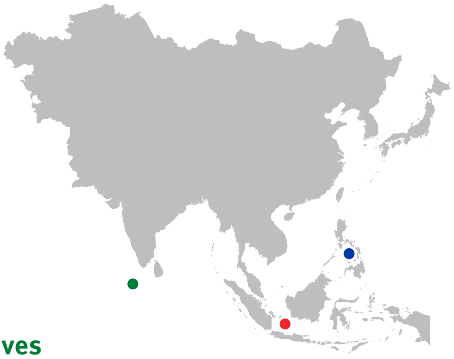
PEOPLE ON THE FRONTLINE



In Asia and the Pacific, **44.1 million** people live in areas with elevation **below 1 metre**

ISLAND NATIONS MOST AT RISK

ASIA

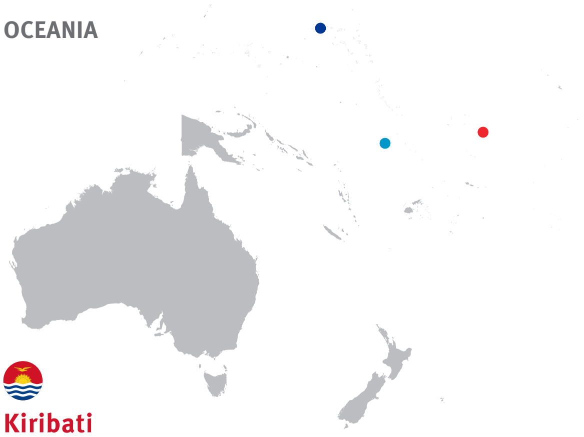


Maldives
80% of land less than 1 metre above sea level

Indonesia
Over 17,000 islands, many already experiencing flooding

Philippines
Coastal and island communities face **storm surges and erosion**

OCEANIA



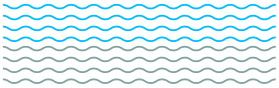
Kiribati
The entire nation averages just **2 metres above sea level**

Tuvalu
The **second-lowest country in the world**, after the Maldives

Marshall Islands
Frequent tidal flooding already displacing communities

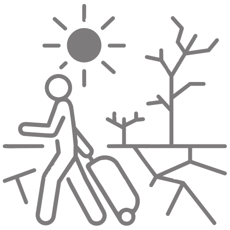
DIVERSE IMPACTS

Homes lost to erosion and permanent flooding



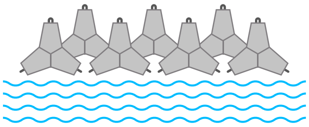
Freshwater contamination from saltwater intrusion

Food insecurity as crops and fisheries decline



Climate migration as communities are forced to relocate

HOW ISLAND NATIONS ARE RESPONDING

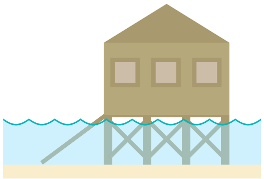


Seawalls and **coastal defences**

Planned relocation for vulnerable communities

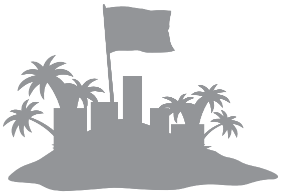
Mangrove restoration to buffer waves

International climate advocacy for **loss and damage funding**

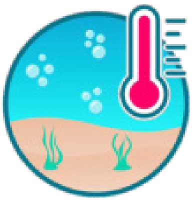


Raised housing and infrastructure

WHY GLOBAL ACTION IS CRITICAL



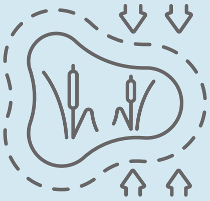
Island nations contribute **less than 1% of global emissions** yet face the **worst impacts** of climate change



Limiting warming to **1.5°C** could reduce future sea-level rise by **up to 50%**

DID YOU KNOW?

- **Some Pacific islands experience flooding during high tides – even without storms**



- **Saltwater intrusion can ruin farmland decades before land disappears**

- **Entire cultures, languages, and heritage sites are at risk**

For a Coming Extinction

By **W.S. Merwin**

Grey whale
Now that we are sending you to The End
That great god
Tell him
That we who follow you invented forgiveness
And forgive nothing

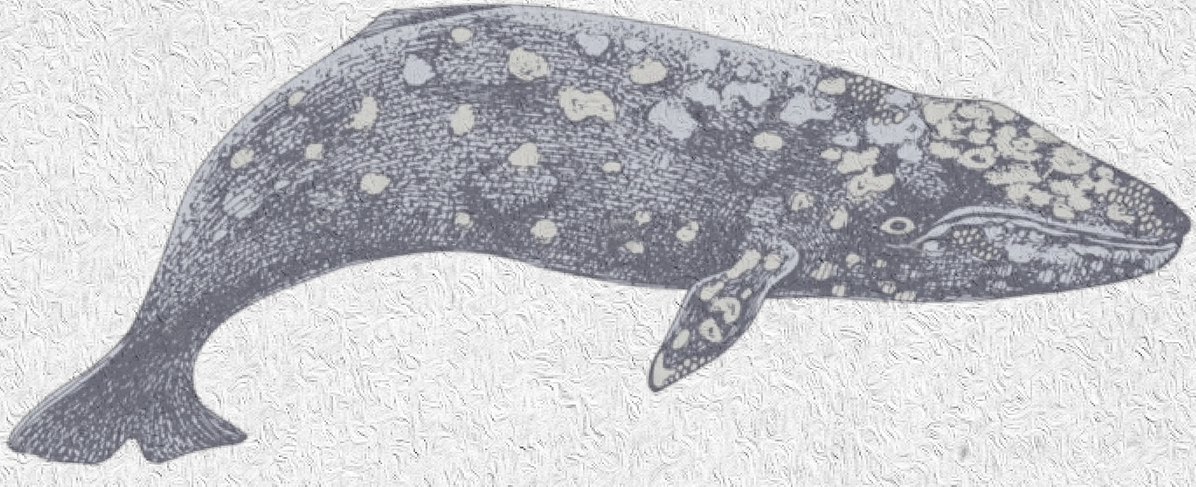
I write as though you could understand
And I could say it
One must always pretend something
Among the dying
When you have left the seas nodding on their stalks
Empty of you
Tell him that we were made
On another day

The bewilderment will diminish like an echo
Winding along your inner mountains
Unheard by us
And find its way out
Leaving behind it the future
Dead
And ours

When you will not see again
The whale calves trying the light
Consider what you will find in the black garden
And its court
The sea cows the Great Auks the gorillas
The irreplaceable hosts ranged countless
And fore-ordaining as stars
Our sacrifices

Join your word to theirs
Tell him
That it is we who are important

William Stanley Merwin (1927–2019) was an American poet, translator, and environmentalist, renowned for lyrical, spare free verse. A two-time Pulitzer Prize winner and U.S. Poet Laureate, he resided in a rural part of Maui, Hawaii, and was dedicated to the restoration of the island's rainforests. "For a Coming Extinction" is from *The Lice*, Merwin's sixth collection of poetry, published in 1967.



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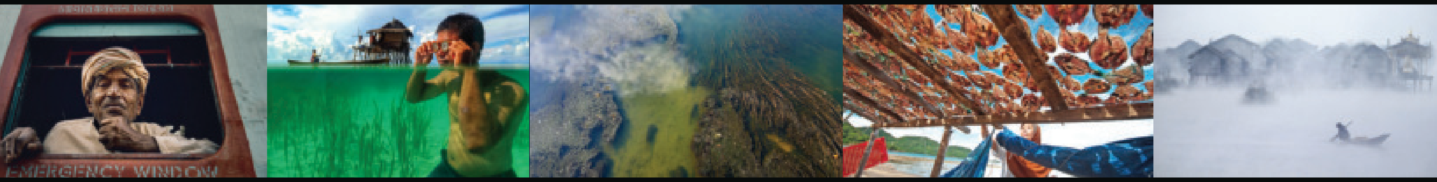

Main photo by Yoshi Shimizu,
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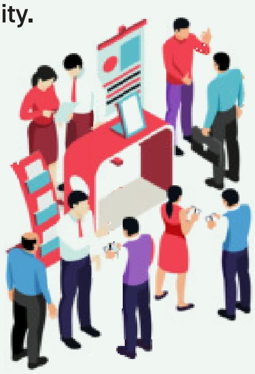
Encourage intercultural understanding by organising events and initiatives that celebrate the diverse cultures across Asia

SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS
Promote regional cooperation on environmental issues, with a focus on sustainable practices and the protection of shared natural resources



NETWORKING EVENTS
Organise conferences and forums that allow professionals and enthusiasts from various fields to connect, share insights, and build lasting partnerships

COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS
Facilitate joint ventures and partnerships in areas such as technology, education, and sports to drive regional development

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
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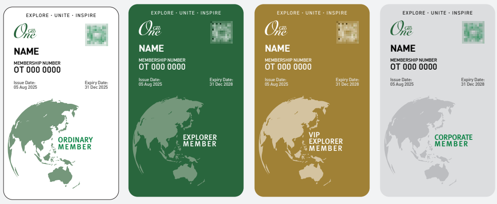

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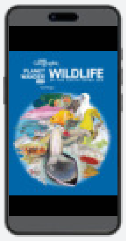

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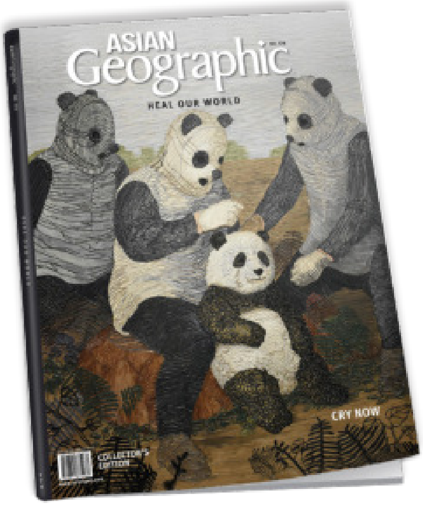

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